SEVEN DREAMERS

BY

ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON

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[See page 103.

SEVEN DREAMERS

BY

ANNIE TRUMBULL SLOSSON

. . . "*I talk of dreams;*
Which are the children of an idle brain,
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy."
ROMEO AND JULIET

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INTRODUCTORY.

"No, I don't call Cap'n Burdick crazy," said my good old friend, Aunt Charry, as we looked out on the quiet village street. "He's right enough about everything but one; smart, forehanded, a good farmer, and a consistent church member. There's only jest one little thing that makes him different from other folks, and that's his thinkin' that the millennium's over and done with instead o' comin', and that he rec'lects it all. Get him on ary other topic and you'd never notice anything queer about his talk. But jest as he's goin' on smooth and sensible, and you thinkin' what a smart, knowledgable man he is, something will be sure to bring up that notion of his. And he'll go on about what a beautiful time it was, and how queer it looked to see the wolves dwellin' with the lambs, and the leopard layin' down with the kids, and the children leadin' 'em, and he'll talk so earnest about it all—his voice shaky and his eyes wet—as he tells how the deserts blossomed like the rose, and the parched ground become a pool; how they

beat up their swords into ploughshares and their spears into prunin'-hooks, that you can't misdoubt he believes it every single word; and when he says, real low and softly, 'And sorrer and sighin' did all flee away,' why, you're nigh onto believin' it yourself, and wishin' you'd lived in them days. Now, that isn't bein' crazy; it's jest kind o' dreamin'. I've had dreams myself jest as real and nat'ral as that, and couldn't scasly believe sometimes after I woke up that they hadn't act'ally happened. But you see I did wake up, and the cap'n never has. That's the difference. There's lots o' that sort; dreamin' awake's about as common's dreamin' asleep. That's what I hold. And as long as the dreams are pleasant, comfortable ones—not nightmares, o' course—why, I sometimes think the people that lives in 'em are about as happy as other folks, and maybe happier. I'm sure they're a sight more interestin' to talk with. You see, they've got somethin' that don't change, and that's a dreadful comfort in this alterin' and twistin' and turnin' world. Real things allers have to alter somehow here; make-believe ones don't. So, with these dreamin' folks, crops may fail, their creaturs die, their children dishonor 'em, elections go wrong, and church meetin's get off the right track—every-

thing real may be in a stir and a mix and a muddle—but their dreams go right straight along, allers jest the same, smooth and quiet and peaceful like.

"And they've got what they want, too, in them dreams, and if they waked up—in this world, I mean—they wouldn't have it. There's everything in the Bible, ain't they? I'm forever a-quotin' from it, as you know. Folks laugh at me about it, but somehow there's allers somethin' there that expresses my meanin' better'n I could put it into talk myself. I'm readin' it in course, now, and only the other day I come to a place in Isaiah where it treats o' this, and it says, 'A hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint.' And so 'tis.

"Why, I 'most wish I could dream that way myself, and so have somethin' that didn't and couldn't ever happen divert my mind,'s they say, from the things that allers are a-happenin'.

"There was Uncle Enoch Stark, over to Derby Plains; he was one of the contentedest men I ever knew. His dream was about his sister Lucilly, that died a baby afore he was born, and how she was still livin' and out West somewheres. It don't seem much to

tell of, but I can tell you it made a wonderful difference in that old man's life. You see, he hadn't any folks, and he'd 'a' been mighty lonesome. But there was allers somethin' happenin' to Lucilly or her family—she had a large one, it seems—and it give him enough to think on. He was forever a-plannin' to go and see her; went so fur sometimes as to pack his carpet-bag. But 'twas too much of a undertakin', and he give it up. When he took his last sickness he wanted Lucilly sent for, but he went off sudden, and hadn't any time to worry about it. And I sometimes try to guess what he thought and said and done when he saw the real Lucilly in the next world—jest a baby, you know, that died o' teethin'. But there, I know 'twas all right then, 'Like a dream when one awaketh,' as the Bible says.

"And in New Granby, where I was born, you know, there was Lucy Ann Breed, a master-hand at dreamin', I can tell you. For what do you think her notion was but that she writ the *Pilgrim's Progress!* Poor Lucy Ann! Folks called her crazy, and made sech fun of her! But she was a hard-workin', patient, self-denyin' woman, and smarter than many o' them that laughed at her. She had a crippled brother with the rickets, and did for

him year after year, though 'twas a pretty hard struggle sometimes. But her queer dream fetched her right along through everything. You wouldn't 'a' thought it so dreadful funny, neither, if you'd seen her face—she was real homely and hard-featur'd—kind o' light up as she was talkin', like Steeple Rock there when the sun shines on it. She was a Christian, if there ever was one, and she was so humble and thankful to think she'd gone and done so much good to souls with her 'poor little book.' ''Tain't me,' she'd say, the tears a-rainin' down her thin, saller face; 'don't praise me; 'twas put into my heart to do it, and I jest writ what was telled me.'

"Well, she's awake now, but she's 'satisfied,' for Scripter says so. And maybe she's met old Mr. Bunyan himself afore now. I guess he won't begrudge her the comfort she got out o' thinkin' she made up his book, for he was sort o' given to dreamin' himself, you know.

"Why, I haven't ever lived or been in a New England village myself where there wasn't one or more sech folks. You've known some yourself, too. You rec'lect Wrestlin' Billy, that lived on Double Pond, I know. Now, did you ever meet a much better man than him? Pious, prayin', quiet, peace-makin', char'table;

he was all that, and more. But some time or other, you know, Billy'd dreamed that he'd wrestled once with a angel, like Jacob, and he never waked up out o' that dream. But what harm come of it, anyway? I hold that he was a better man for it, somehow. You've heard him tell about it, haven't you? Don't you rec'lect how earnest and excited he'd get, so proud, and yet humble at the same time, tellin' o' that awful fight in the night-time, when he couldn't see who he was a-strugglin' with? Wasn't it creepy and scarey to hear him cry out, so loud and shrill like, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me?'

"My! my! I never could keep from believin' in that story while he was a-tellin' it, could you? nor from bein' glad, either, when 'twas all over, the break o' day come, and Billy had pervailed. Don't you know how tired out he'd look after the wrestlin' part was ended, and how he'd wipe off his face and catch his breath and whisper out, 's well as he could, 'An' he blessed me there?'

"And there was Jerry Whaples, o' Groton Corners; I don't know but his idee was the unusualest of any I've come acrost, for he took for his motter and watchword and war-cry, as you might say, through his whole life long, a verse from the Bible that never seemed to

have much meanin' to anybody else. But it jest helped him along through everything. It's in Isaiah; I've looked it up lots o' times, and tried to get some comfort out of it: 'At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages.' Ain't that queer, now? Think o' that for a help and a comfort and a restin'-place! But 'twas all that to Jerry. He had awful troubles —lost his wife and every child, one after the other; had his house and barn burned down —had sickness and sorrer and trouble. But through everything that passage, that seems so holler and empty o' comfort or even meanin' to us, by itself, carried him safe along. I've heard him say it in sech dreadful times, enough to make a man's faith give way, I tell you. And when it come out in that tremblin' voice, and him a-smilin' through his cryin', why, it some way appeared even to me to have somethin' deep and holy and comfortin' in the sound. 'At Michmash he hath laid up his carriages.' I can't laugh about it as some do. I believe some way there is a meanin' to it, and 'twas showed to old Jerry in his dream. For a verse that lifts a bein' out o' sech dreadful pits o' sorrer, strengthens him in battle, and comforts him till he can smile even through his cryin', and what's more, helps him to die the death o' the right-

eous—for 'twas what he stammered out, a word at a time, jest before he shet his eyes forever—why, it must, it *must* have somethin' to it we're too wide-awake to get hold of. Yes, he jest breathed it out at the last, so low that they couldn't hardly catch it, 'At Michmash,' says he, softly, and smilin' 's he speaks, 'he—hath—laid up—his—carriages,' and he was gone!

"Reuben Davison, down Bethel way, that allers had a child's high-chair put close by him at table, he must 'a' been dreamin' somethin', though nobody ever knew what. He'd never had chick nor child of his own, as fur's any one knew, and he was a hard, harsh kind o' man. But they tell me there was a terr'ble soft, lovin' sort o' look would come all over his featur's sometimes when he looked at that chair—jest a plain, cheap wooden one, you know, but a child's, and high.

"Deacon Levi, as they called him, who used to go to the door on dark stormy nights and hold up a lantern's if he was lightin' some one home, and call out so kind o' pitiful, 'Mary, Mary;' old Mis' Prentice, over in Bradley, a real meek, softly little woman, who allers declared to the last that she'd been a pirate years ago, but was a changed woman now; 'Perpetual Motion Neddy,' from acrost

the river; Dr. Weaver, that shet himself up the tenth o' every month, and wore a woman's bonnet from sunrise to sunset—they were all a-dreamin', dreamin', every soul of 'em.

"They have different names for sech folks. They say they're 'cracked,' they've 'got a screw loose,' they're 'a little off,' they 'ain't all there,' and so on. But nothin' accounts for their notions so well to my mind as to say they're all jest dreamin'. It's the way o' the world to laugh at 'em, and it allers was, back to the time when Joseph's brothers got together and whispered about him, and said, 'Behold, this dreamer cometh.' But they'd be missed, I tell you, out o' the village they live in—they're mostly country folks, you know—more'n some o' the wide-awake ones. I'm sure I rec'lect some o' them I've known years back better than ary other folks, and I think of 'em more frequent. And I'm glad—I ain't ashamed to say it—that they never waked up this side o' heaven, 'till the day breaks and the shadders flee away,' 's Scripter says. And what's more, I believe—when they look back on those soothin', sleepy, comfortin' idees o' theirn, that somehow helped 'em along through all the pesterin' worry and frettin' trouble o' this world—I believe, I say, that they're glad too. You'll think I'm no

more'n a dreamer myself when I tell you that sometimes as I set here, thinkin' I can 'most hear 'em, one after another, speakin' from 'way up there somewheres and sayin', in the words o' Scripter, 'I awaked and beheld, and my sleep was sweet unto me.'"

I.

HOW FAITH CAME AND WENT.

"A dream of home, a dream of home."

Moore.

HOW FAITH CAME AND WENT.

I HAVE never told the story till now. No one ever knew it all except Max and me, and Max is dead. She is gone, too, poor child; so no one can be troubled by the tale, and I should like to tell the whole truth before I too go away. I need not go further back than the day she first came to us; the story really begins there. Of Max's life before that day, and of mine, no one will care to hear, and I do not care to speak. Max was a doctor, and a good one, I think, having many patients, who loved and trusted him well. He was not yet thirty, but he seemed older, being grave and quiet—made so by things which had happened in that past of which I am not going to speak—and I was his sister, ten years older; a plain, shy, silent woman, but the only one he had ever loved, for he did not remember his mother. We lived together in Sudbury, a little New England

village, and there we were quietly happy in our small but cosey house.

I am an old woman now, but I remember as if it were yesterday just how everything looked on that day—the day my story begins. The village street ran east and west; our house, with its little yard in front, stood on that street and faced the south. It was early in June, but the season was backward; my roses were as yet only green buds, but I had been at work among them, fastening a spray here, picking off there a dead leaf, and brushing the dust away. The sun was low; it was late afternoon; I walked to the gate and looked down the street, for it was time to expect Max. I can see that street now just as it looked then. A heavy farm wagon was lumbering along, raising clouds of dust—there had been little rain that spring—and as I looked towards the west the sun, so low down then, shone through that dusty cloud, and made it like yellow gold in the air, and through that misty brightness she was coming to me. From the west, down the village street, I saw a figure walking towards me. It

was a young girl, slight and rather tall. I could not see her face plainly against the brightness, and I waited for her. I knew all the young folk of the village, and they had ever a pleasant word or smile for the doctor's old-maid sister. But as I stood at the open gate looking towards her, I saw that she was a stranger. I had never seen that slight young form, the pretty head, with the bright loose hair about the forehead, seeming part of the sunset's misty glow, those soft brown eyes, that wistful mouth. Yes, she was certainly a stranger; but, as I thought this, a smile, which was surely a recognizing one, broke over the face, and the light steps were quickened. I had seen that she wore a simple print gown of blue and white, and that her straw hat with its blue ribbon was swinging by its looped strings upon one arm. With a half-impatient, weary air she shook back her light loose hair, and stretching out towards me her small, pretty hands, she said: "You are waiting for me. Oh, I am so glad to be at home!"

People nowadays are taught to take to pieces and examine their feelings, and after-

wards explain them to others. I never learned this, and I cannot tell you, after all these years, just how I felt when this strange young thing, whom I had never before seen, looked at and spoke to me thus, but I know I was greatly amazed. For an instant I felt a bodily dizziness, as when I had suddenly risen from stooping over my flower-beds; my head swam, and before I could speak, the sweet, childish voice began again: "Am I late? I have taken such a long walk, and it grew so warm! You are not vexed with me?" And the two small, pretty hands clasped my arm, while the brown, soft eyes looked into mine.

What I should have said I do not know There is no use in trying to guess that, for at that very instant I saw Max coming. He was at the gate almost before I knew it, and looking curiously at us two. Then I found my voice, and gasped out, "Oh, Max!" That was all. But at the words the child turned towards him with a bright look of welcome, but no surprise, and with a faint, soft blush, said, in her low, sweet voice, "Dear Max!"

When I try to remember the look that came

upon my brother's face at these words I find that I am looking at it in the light of what came afterwards; and it seems as if even then there was no start of wonder, no amaze, only gladness and answering love in that look as he bent it on her. But I know that I turned quickly towards him, and tried to convey by a look the thought which had just come to me, the feeling that the child's mind was astray, and we must aid her. That he read my meaning at once was owing to no skill of mine, but to his own quickness—Max was so clever always. Taking the little hand she had laid upon his arm, he said, in a quiet, natural voice,

"Let us go into the house now and have our tea."

And we all went in. As we entered the little sitting-room the girl, walking with no uncertain tread, but as if she knew the place, took her hand from Max's arm and stepped lightly towards the looking-glass which hung between the windows.

"Oh, how my hair is blown about!" she said, with a laugh in her voice. "Shall I run up-stairs and smooth it?"

"No, dear. Just come into my room now, you are so tired." And I led the way into my little bedroom on the first floor, and left her there. Then in hurried words I told Max all I knew. "There is something wrong with the brain," he said, "and she has wandered away from her friends. Do not excite or startle her; let her rest quietly to-night, and we will decide what course to take."

Then she came back to us, and we had our tea. She was quiet, seeming tired, but there was no flush of fever on her face, no wild, unsettled look in the soft brown eyes. Max talked, told of his patients, spoke of the village news, and sometimes the girl would say something of her walk, of the sunset, of the flowers on the table—always in that strangely sweet childish voice, which seemed then, as ever afterwards, the best music I had ever heard. Then, later, she went, quite of her own accord, to the piano, and ran her fingers over the keys, playing little bits, some new and strange to us, some old and familiar. Then her voice sounded faint but sweet as she sang softly to herself. Suddenly the strain grew louder, and

we knew the air and words, and looked quickly at each other.

The dear old song heard so long ago, in our very childhood, and never since till now.

"The old days, the dear days, where are they?"

So it rang out, as from that far-away past, and we forgot the present—forgot the strangely quiet child sitting there in the dim summer twilight, and thought only of our dead.

"The old days, the dear days, where are they?"

The voice died away, the sad questioning was stilled, and a little form sank quietly to the floor, and lay there white and still.

That was the beginning of a long and terrible illness, a kind of brain-fever, but with some complications which seemed to puzzle the doctors, one and all, for Max called to his aid other, but I am sure not wiser, heads. And all the time most careful and diligent search was made for the child's friends—for some clew to the mystery of her coming—but all in vain. Advertisements, inquiries, and even the assistance of experienced detectives all failed utterly. She had been seen at the far end of the village

street, and from there onward to our door, on the afternoon she came to us, but further back than that we could not trace her. She herself could not be questioned. For many days she knew no one, and lay sometimes in a strange quiet almost like death itself, then again in delirium, with quick excited talk. But from no speech of hers could we learn anything save that she was gently bred, and that there seemed nothing in her young soul that was not white and sweet. So the days went on. We had laid her in the airy pleasant bedroom upstairs, where years before our little sister slept, the young sister whom we had laid away with many tears in the sad past. And while watching and nursing the young stranger there in that sacred room we grew at times almost to think that our dead was again with us, and we loved her as our own. Max was unwearied in his care, watching day and night, and I was almost always at her bedside. There was nothing painful or distressing in the girl's talk, even when most excited. Hour after hour the sweet voice would run on, telling of childish play, of country sights and sounds, of lessons

learned, of work, or play, or study. I need not tell you that we watched eagerly for names, either of people or places, which should aid us in our search for her friends; but nothing came. She spoke of "the hill," "the bridge," of "down the river;" she called the "girls" and the "children," she asked why the "horses" did not come, and if the "grass" was cut. But that was all. In her whole illness of many weeks no name ever passed her lips, and all her past was still a sealed book to us, when one day in midsummer the wandering, far-away look left her eyes, and the soul came back to the child.

Max and I were both with her; no one else was there. She had been sleeping a long time sweetly and quietly. Again and again I had bent over her, and seen the white lids still shut down, and heard the soft regular breathing. But at last, as I stood at her side and Max sat by the window, both of us looking at the pale thin face upon the pillow, the brown eyes opened, and we saw, both of us at once, that she seemed to know us. We were silent, watchful, for an instant, and then saw the eyes

turn towards the window, a light come into them, the hands reach feebly out towards the sunlight and him, and she murmured, as on that first June day when she came to us, "Dear Max!"

Ah, well, I find I cannot remember it all as well as I thought I could. What did Max do then, what did I do, as we saw that with the light of reason there yet came no light upon the child's past? I do not seem to recall the steps by which we came to see that she was our own, a part of our present lives, belonging to us and to our history, and to no one else on earth, and that we could no more send her from us than we could have driven away our own flesh and blood.

As far as we could see, she had no past. If God had made her newly that June day, and set her down fresh and sweet and unstained in our village street on that golden summer afternoon, she could not have seemed more wholly devoid of a history, a hitherto. Her convalescence was slow, she was so very weak, and she could learn of us, of our life, and of all her surroundings gradually, a little at

a time, as a child learns its home and friends. She may have learned in that way; I do not know; but nothing ever seemed as if new and strange to her, or appeared to surprise her as unfamiliar. I can never remember when she first spoke my name. Max called me by it—Ruth—and she soon used the name as though she had always known it. In the days of her great feebleness she spoke little but our names and the names of the things she needed or wished for. As she grew stronger she talked more with us, but it was of the things about her, of her illness and our loving care.

"How long have I been sick?" she asked, one day, and we told her. "Yes," she said. "It is August now—is it not?—and I was taken ill that day in June after my long walk." And again she said, "It seems like a dream, these long weeks, and I remember nothing distinctly since I sat singing to you and Max that last evening."

Among the doctors who were called in to see her during her illness was one who was skilled in nervous ailments, and who knew, oh, so much! of the workings of the brain.

He seemed wonderfully interested in the patient, and watched her closely and curiously. I used to hear him and Max talking, and tried to understand, but I could not follow them. It was all about the little girl's brain, and the part of it which had gone wrong, and the "gray matter" there, and how it would come all right with returning health, and she would have the past again which she had lost, and know that the present and we and our lives were new and foreign, and not her own. I knew they were very wise, and that I was very ignorant, but I could not feel that they were right in this. Perhaps I did not want to believe it; for I loved her so, and I was beginning to be jealous of a past in which we—Max and I—had no part. I liked to think that she was all our own, that God gave her to us, all new and fresh in her young girlhood, and yet with a kind of memory of things in our past which somehow made it her own, and drew her to us. I am growing sadly confused, and am quite beyond my depth, I see. You cannot understand, and I cannot put it into better words. But who could see the love that shone

in her face when she looked at us, the child-like trust and confidence in us, and believe that she had not at least dreamed of us before? And, oh, how can I tell you of her feeling towards Max? No one could possibly mistake that. There was no room for doubt. She gave him the love a girl gives only to her promised husband. Something—I know not what—had given her the right to love him so, to claim his love. And Max loved her. I tell it abruptly, but it did not come as a sudden revelation to me. I seemed to know it from the first, and without any surprise, as if I had watched the love-story in its very beginning, and knew how it would end. And so, without asking of his or consent of hers (unless in some dream-land we knew nothing of), they were plighted lovers. Perhaps you will wonder that we did not, as she grew stronger, question her as to her history. We dared not, for fear of startling her, and frightening away the reason which had just come back. The doctors agreed in this, that we should not trouble her with questions, but wait with what patience we could for the memory which they believed would

soon return. We did not yet know what to call her. Her clothing was without mark of any kind, and she had never spoken of herself by any name. I have said that in the years gone by we had lost a young sister. That sister's name was Faith, and it was dearer to us both than any name on earth. The dead girl's picture hung in the sitting-room down-stairs, and the first day that our patient was carried there, and placed on the sofa under the windows, she seemed attracted by the sweet face in the picture. She lay looking at it a long time silently, and at last I said, "Do you think our little sister Faith is like me?"

"No," she answered, thoughtfully; "I can never see any look in her face like yours, though I often look for it. I have always been glad that my name was Faith, like hers. I think you love me better for that." And so it was we came to call her by that dear name, and for her other name we gave her ours.

You will not wonder that in our quiet little village the story of our strange guest made much stir and talk. We said as little as possible of the matter, but such things come soon

to be known among people who have little excitement in their dull lives. The notices inserted in the local papers, the inquiries made, the famous doctors' visits, the general air of mystery about our visitor and her illness, were talked and gossiped of in spite of all we could do. And I saw that this pained Max greatly. As the days went on, and no word came to us from any one who might claim the girl, and as the tie between him and her grew stronger and tenderer, he shrank from any questioning into the matter, even from me, and the village talk was intolerable; and so it came about that he accepted an offer made him some months before, and we left forever our old home, and went to a town hundreds of miles distant, where our story was unknown. And here our little Faith, bearing our name and living with us, was supposed to be some relative, and known also as Max's betrothed.

You would hardly think that a person without a past, or at least lacking the memory of one, would seem so like other people, and show the want so little. I cannot tell you why this was so, but certainly no one

appeared to notice anything strange about the girl, and we ourselves almost forgot at times how she had come to us. I can remember, as I look back, some things she said, which from time to time recalled the mystery of her former life, and made us wonder again, as at first, if we should ever know more. One day we had been reading together a story which told of a mother's devotion — a pretty tale —and Faith was very thoughtful afterwards. She sat looking into the fire silently, and then startled me by asking:

"Ruth, do I remember my mother?"

"What do you think, dear?" I said.

She answered slowly, as if trying to recall something: "Sometimes I think I do, not as a person whose face or form I can at all remember, but as a love, a tenderness, a great beautiful care all about me, something that pitied and was sorry for me, and—" Her voice died away, and she sat thinking again; then suddenly said, "But it goes away, and then it is you I remember, and all your goodness to me." She left her seat, and coming over to me, knelt down, and putting her arms about

me, said, "I have not needed my mother, dear Ruth, you have been so good, so loving; I have not needed anything with you and Max." I was so glad she said that! Were we indeed taking the place of anything bright and beautiful she might have had in that unknown world of hers?

Certainly she was very happy. I do not say much of the love which she and Max bore each other; it is something I cannot talk of. Max had never loved before; his had been a troubled life, with many cares and some bitter sorrows. And his whole heart went out with a mighty love towards this fair young thing, who came to him that summer day from some unknown world where she had loved and trusted and belonged to him while yet he knew it not. They were to be married in June. "I will wait a year," Max had said to me. "If we hear nothing before that time, I shall surely have the right to take her for my wife."

I have said that during her illness no name ever passed her lips. But afterwards, in the winter, she spoke two or three names we did

not know. She had taken a slight cold, and was somewhat feverish. I had gone to her bedside before I slept to give her a good-night kiss. As I stooped over her she said, drowsily, as if half asleep, "Are we going back to Greenmore to-morrow?" I caught at the name—the first she had ever spoken which might tell us anything—and asked, "Where is Greenmore, Faith?" She opened her eyes wider, looked strangely at me for just one instant, then said, "I meant Sudbury;" and further questioning brought nothing more. She did not know Greenmore; she meant Sudbury, so she kept saying. But I told Max, and he agreed with me that we must follow out this new clew. No town bearing the name of Greenmore could be found. You may be sure that though Max dreaded unspeakably finding those who might take our little one away, still he was conscientious and painstaking in his search. But he sought in vain. When we had quite given up the search there was found in an old town history, among some books belonging to our father, the name we were looking for; but it was given as the

ancient name of a village now bearing another and quite different one. However, Max went there, taking a long journey to the spot. He found a busy manufacturing village called Millburg, and was assured that it had never borne any other name. But on looking up and questioning some of the oldest inhabitants he was told that the first site of the town was on a bleak hill several miles away. Many years ago it had been deserted, and the inhabitants had come down into a more fertile and better watered spot, and built their new village there, and the old town had been called Greenmore. That was more than sixty years ago. Max visited the desolate spot, saw its few ruined buildings, the wooden walls black with time and wear, the windows gone, and came away with a strange wonder growing upon him. Where had she heard the name of this deserted, dreary, old-time place? Had she by chance met it in the old book where we first came across it, and which she might have taken from the shelf, where she often handled the volumes? Perhaps so; I cannot explain it thus. It is only a part of the mys-

tery to me. It was not meant for us to understand.

Another name came several times from her lips. The first time was when, as in the case I last mentioned, she was ill. She had been suffering for several days with headache, and had with it some fever and restlessness. It was late in November, and during the night a light snow had fallen, the first snow of the season. Max rose early, wishing to see a patient before breakfast, and as the office boy had not yet come, he went himself outside, and wrapped in a rough, thick overcoat, not worn since the last winter, began sweeping the snow from the path. Just then Faith came from her room, and went to the window of the sitting-room. She had not known of the snow, and was all unprepared for the white world she saw. I was standing near her, and saw a curious look come over her face. I cannot say what made it seem so strange, but it was as if a little child had waked in some unfamiliar spot, and was half frightened, half pleased. Then her eyes fell upon Max at his work, and a cry—I shall never forget it; it

was made up of rapture, wonder, fear—came from her parted lips: "It's John!" I caught her in my arms, and in an instant—oh, I cannot tell you how quickly, how suddenly—that strangely mingled look fell away from her like a mask, and her face, a little pale and wistful, but my own little girl's face again, looked up at me, as she said, "Oh, Ruth, for a minute I did not know Max; I think the snow dazzled my eyes." And she was her own happy, sweet self again.

In the sitting-room of our new home there was an open fireplace, but it was closed by a fire-board such as those in use at that time, and as the weather was still warm when we moved into the house, we had never had a fire made there. One chilly day in late October, when Max had gone to see a patient some miles away, I thought I would give him a pleasant greeting when he returned from his cold ride by lighting a cheery wood fire. It was soon done, with the help of my little maid. I had a pair of tall brass andirons which had belonged to my mother, and they had been carefully packed and brought with us

from Sudbury. These were set in place, the hickory logs piled on, the kindling laid underneath and lighted, and soon my fire was blazing and roaring and sending up showers of sparks. I sat down before it in the large high-backed chair which had been my father's, and so fell to dreaming, as one does in the firelight. The time slipped away, and the room grew dark, save where the light of my cheerful fire fell. Suddenly I heard a quick, light step, the door opened, and Faith came in. My back was towards the door, and before I could turn or speak, she called in her clear, sweet voice, "Grandfather, are you there?"

I was silent, being rather startled, and she came slowly across the room feeling her way in the darkness by chairs and table, and as she came she said again, more softly, as though afraid of waking some one: "Grandfather, is it you? Are you asleep?"

Then I turned, and speaking very quietly and naturally, said: "It's I, Faith; come and see my very pleasant fire."

She was at my side in an instant, stooping down and looking curiously into my face, a

frightened look in her eyes. I laid my hand on hers and said: "You did not expect to see the fire, did you? And the lamps are not lighted, so you could hardly see me."

"Yes, yes," she said; "that is the reason. I am confused—it is all so strange. I thought —I cannot remember what I thought; but it is all right now, and you are here, my dear quiet Ruth."

At another time, our little servant being absent, I asked Faith to go down to the kitchen pantry for something I needed. She did not return, and after waiting some minutes I went down after her. I found her standing in the pantry before a large basket of winter apples which had just been sent home from the market, the first we had seen. They were of different sorts, and made a pretty picture with their red, yellow, green, and russet tints; so I did not wonder the child was attracted by them. But as I came in she said, without looking up: "Isn't it too bad? There are no Dennison reddings here, and John does not care much for any other apples. May I go and see if there are any left on the tree by the well?"

How strange it sounded! Of course there was no well in our little town garden, and I had never before heard of a Dennison redding apple; and oh, who, who was John?

One day Max brought home with him from the hospital a little boy that had been brought to the city for medical treatment, from the country, some miles away. His father was a farmer, and the boy was quite unused to city sights and sounds, and very homesick. So Max with his kindly heart brought him to us for comfort.

As soon as she saw him Faith seemed strangely drawn towards him. She did not make many close friends outside our home, but she took the little lonesome boy at once into her heart. Every day she went to the hospital and brought him home to spend hours with us, and she was never so happy as when playing with or talking to her little friend. His name was Robert, but she always called him David, though he strongly objected to the name.

"What do you call me that for?" he asked, in blunt boyish fashion.

"Because you look like David," she answered, "and I sometimes think that you are really he."

I suppose she was thinking of the boy David in the Bible, "ruddy and of a fair countenance," for his cheeks were like red apples, his eyes blue, his hair like flax. Such long, long talks as they had! He was about ten years old, and a real country boy—plain, practical, sometimes acting a little rough, though good-hearted and kindly. It was odd to see them together, so strongly unlike, she in her pretty daintiness, with soft, loving little ways of her own, and he a farmer's boy, in his coarse, ill-fitting clothes, with blunt speech and awkward manners. As they sat together she would put her arm about him and draw him close to her, often stooping to press a kiss upon his yellow curls. But he would push her from him, with a boy's dislike to such demonstrations, and say, "Don't do that; I hate it."

"But you used to like it, David," she would say, gently, with a puzzled look.

"No, I didn't," the boy would answer;

"and my name is Robert. I keep telling and telling you."

She loved best to hear stories of his life at the farm—the simple, easy life there, of the cows and sheep, the pastures. the dairy, the hay-making, the corn-planting. Her eyes would shine, her face light up, as he told the tale in homely phrases, and she would draw him again to her with an almost passionate fondness, and cry, "Oh, David, was it not beautiful, our life at the farm?"

You see, she thought to please the boy by playing that she had been there with him, and remembered it all. But he was too practical for such fancies, and would retort:

"How do *you* know what 'twas like? You never was there; and I tell you again my name *isn't* David; it's Robert."

And she in her turn would tell him stories. I suppose she took them from books, for surely in such a summer-land as she must have come from to us there could have been no deep drifts of snow, no strayed and frost-chilled lambs, no ice-ponds on which to slide or skate, no bright frosty mornings with jingling

sleigh-bells out-doors and roaring wood fires within.

It was a sad day when the boy left us for his home. Faith clung to him as if she could never let him go, kissing his ruddy cheeks, his flaxen hair, his rough, red little hands.

"Tell them—tell them," she cried out, in broken, half-understood words—"tell them—tell John—I—" And her words died away in sobs and caresses, from which the boy, so glad to go to his home and his mother, roughly broke away. She had heard him talk so much of the farm and the folk there that she fancied now that she knew and loved them all, for she was full of her fancies. It was many a day before she ceased to mourn for her lost playmate, and to speak of "dear little David" and "the farm." But time and the near approach of her wedding-day at last banished her sorrow, and brought forgetfulness and comfort.

They were to be married, as I have said, in June. Her simple preparations were all made. Many a happy hour she and I had sat together sewing on the dainty garments, talking of the

future and her new life with Max. During this time I ventured sometimes to question her of her past life, but very cautiously, that she might not be startled. I asked her once if she remembered when she first came to us, but she said she did not, she was "so very small." And when, at another time, I asked her when she first began to love Max, she blushed and smiled, and answered that she could scarcely place the exact time she had loved him, so many years—"since she was a little child." So the days and weeks slipped by, and June came again with its blue skies and flowers. It was the day before the wedding, which was to be a very quiet one, from the little stone church near us. Faith was like a bird that day, in and out of the house and garden, singing to herself, or throwing me a light word or kiss as she came and went. Max was very busy paying his last visits to patients whom he must leave for a fortnight, for he and Faith were to have two weeks of rest together in the mountains. But when he came in for a hurried word at intervals there was a look of such complete, such perfect content

upon his face as I had never in all his life seen there before.

As the day drew to a close Faith seemed a little weary, and I did not wonder, for she had been busy since sunrise. As I sat in the doorway resting she came and sat down by me, and laid her head in my lap. I smoothed back the bright soft hair, and as I touched her forehead I saw that it was hot, and that her cheeks were flushed.

"You have tired yourself, my child," I said, "and Max will scold."

"Max never scolds," she said, softly. And then, raising her head, she looked into my face, and spoke gravely, and with almost a solemn sweetness in her tone. "Ruth, I do not talk much to you of my love for Max, do I? But I want to tell you to-night that my whole heart is his. If I should die before he makes me his wife, if he should die before he is my husband, we should still belong to each other, and some day God would bring us together again." I could not speak, and seeing the tears in my eyes, she dashed away some bright drops from her own, and rose hastily.

With a radiant smile, and the pretty pink flush on her face which had been there since she came from her garden work, she said, "It is time for Max; I am going to meet him." She ran down the path, so fair and sweet in her simple blue dress, her straw hat hanging on her arm, and as she passed into the street she said, looking back at me, "Good-bye; I am going to meet—*John.*"

That name again instead of Max! But the child was tired and nervous, and I would not startle her by showing that she had spoken the wrong name. So I said nothing but "Good-bye, my darling." I rarely used pet names like that; it was not in my quiet, old-fashioned way. I am glad I said it then. And so she went down the dusty street through the sunlight towards the west, and into the misty glow, till I lost sight of her in the distance.

I never saw her again!

Few words are best. All that I could speak would tell you no better what came afterwards. The first anxious doubt, the lingering suspense, the sickening dread, the seeking, the weary, weary watching for one who never

came, I cannot tell of it. As vainly as a year before we sought one ray of light from the unknown world she had left in coming to us, so all in vain we looked now for one glimpse of the life into which she had gone from us. I will not tell you one word of Max and his sorrow. You have no right to ask it, or even to guess at that grief with which a stranger intermeddleth not. I have told you how the child came, and how she went away; there is nothing more. Two years later I met one day a lady whom I had known slightly during the year the child was with us, and who knew nothing of her sudden going.

"So your pretty young cousin has left you," she said. "I have always remembered her so well since I met her here: Faith, I think you called her. So I knew her at once when I saw her again, though I caught such a hurried glimpse of her. I was in the cars, and the train stopped a minute before crossing a bridge, and just there, opposite my window, was your little cousin. She had run out from the prettiest old farm-house—her home, I suppose—and was calling to some one whom I

did not see. 'John! John!' she said, in that clear, pleasant voice of hers. I heard it as plainly as you hear me now; but before I could open my window or speak to her the cars went on." Another clew, another vain hope! The lady could not remember just where this occurred, but she told us all she could recall, and search again began. But in vain, of course, as I felt sure it would be. It was merely a fancied resemblance; and John is such a common name!

The learned doctor who had been always so interested in "the case," as he called our Faith and her story, talked wisely of it all. But I paid little attention to what he said, for I knew it was not true.

God sent her new and fresh to earth that day from some land where she had always dreamed of us, and where in some mysterious way, in some vision if not in reality, she had seen and loved and promised herself to Max. God took her away again. I do not try to guess why. But some day, through a misty glow, in a land where it is always summer, I shall see her coming down the golden street

towards me, her soft brown eyes looking wistfully at me, her bright hair loose upon her forehead, her small, pretty hands reaching out towards me, and she will say again, as at first she said it: "You are waiting for me. Oh, I am so glad to be at home!"

II.

BOTANY BAY.

"*I was his soul; he lived not but in me.*
We were so close within each other's breast.
The rivets were not found that joined us first.
. . . . . *We were so mixed*
As meeting streams; both to ourselves were lost.
We were one man; we could not give or take
But from the same; for he was I, I he."

Dryden.

BOTANY BAY.

His name was Balaam Montmorency. How its two incongruous parts came together, who gave him this name, with its union of the biblical and romantic, I never knew, and I think nobody in Stonington knew any more than I did. In fact, few, even in the village itself, had ever heard the whole of his name. He was generally called "old Balaam" or "old Bay," until some village wag hit upon the title—whose fitness you will recognize as my story goes on—Botany Bay, and so he was called to the end of his life.

I cannot remember when I first saw him, for, from my earliest childhood, he was a familiar and well-known object. So short of stature as almost to deserve the name of dwarf, with a shock head of tangled yellow hair, bleached almost white by the sun, a thin brown face, and the big blue eyes of a child, who that ever saw him can forget poor Botany Bay?

His business was one well known and much followed in former times, but now unknown save in the most primitive and rural of communities: he was a gatherer and vender of roots and herbs. Day after day, year by year, he roamed through wood and swamp, by stream and highway, over plain and hill-side, in search of treasure. With bag on back, and basket in each hand, he came every day into the village from his rambles, bringing the sweetness, the spiciness, the tastes and smells and greenness of the forest with him. Birch, sassafras, and winter-green for the home-made root beer; pennyroyal and mint to "take to meetin'"; sweet-clover to lay in the linen-chest, or among the handkerchiefs in the bureau drawer; boneset, prince's pine, hardhack, yarrow, "injun posy," peppermint, skull-cap, pokeroot, dock, snakeroot, wild-cherry, gold-thread, and bloodroot, for medicines; dandelions and cowslips for "greens"; pigeon-berries for red ink; bayberries for candles—all these were among his stores. He brought, too, wild plants to make beautiful the village gardens, the sweetbrier with its fragrant leaves

and pink blossoms, the woodbine to trail over fence and wall, or cover the porch with its five-fingered leaves, so green in summer, so brightly crimson in autumn; the swamp honeysuckle, with its sticky flowers of pink or white, yellow and red lilies for the garden borders, blueflags, and vivid cardinal-flower. From his basket came the small, sweet huckleberries of the early season, the later and larger blueberries with their whitey bloom, the low and high blackberry, and wild raspberries, both black and red. No strawberries now, from garden or hot-bed, have the wild flavor of those small cone-shaped ones which old Bay brought us in early summer; even the puckery choke-cherries were pleasant to our young palates—and oh, how nice were the spicy checkerberries, the aromatic sassafras, sweet birch, and sarsaparilla, the wild plums, purple and yellow, the fox and frost grapes!

And how much he knew of these children of the wildwood! He could tell you of their haunts, their seasons, their habits, their virtues. He knew them, not only when in full bloom or mature fruit they were most easily

recognized, but in earliest babyhood, when first their tender shoots of pale pink or delicate green pierced the cold ground, or in old age, when the dry and empty fruit swung on the leafless stems, and when even dry fruit and bare stalks were gone he found his friends underground by root or bulb, and knew them in their graves.

I have said that I cannot remember my first sight of old Balaam, still less can I recollect how from acquaintances we became friends. I have always from boyhood loved the woods and what grows in them, but whether this love drew Bay and me together, or whether his companionship first gave me that taste for the wildwood, I do not know; but friends we always were. Bay was not fond of the village boys generally, and "small blame to him," as the Irish say. The youngsters teased him unmercifully, stole his roots and herbs, called him names, played him tricks, and were generally nuisances to the poor man. So he avoided them, never sought their companionship, carefully concealed from them the locality of his rarest plants, and was obstinately

silent when questioned as to where and how he found them. So I considered myself very fortunate to be in the old man's good graces, and to be allowed, as I was, day after day, to accompany him in his rambles, and I grew to know, better than most boys, the woods and swamps around our village, and what they held. As I look back now I can see myself, a small, flaxen-haired boy, with "cheek of tan," trotting along by my queer little old friend, and listening eagerly to his quaint talk. Off the East Road, out to the Devil's Den, along Anguilla Brook, towards Mystic, through Flanders, to Lantern Hill, to Quiambaug Cove —all these ways we took, often walking the whole distance of many miles, but sometimes having a lift from a friendly farmer, on hay-cart or wagon. Some of the flowers we found in these rambles I have never since seen, others I have encountered in far northern or extreme southern parts of our country, and greeted with a strange thrill of memory as I thought of my boyhood and poor Botany Bay. I well remember as a red-letter day the July morning when we first found on Lantern Hill the

rhododendron, with its thick, glossy, green leaves and flowers of pale rose. Bay called it "big laurel," and told me of some far-away mountain country — very vaguely described — where he had seen this beautiful shrub growing in great profusion, "close together, an' taller'n a man." He carefully separated the petals — for he was very tender always with his flowers — and showed me that the throat, or "swaller," as he called it, was greenish, and spotted with red; and he enjoined secrecy as to the discovery, as there were but few plants there, and "some pesky woman might want to dig 'em up for her posy-gardin." And with what wonder and admiration I first gazed upon the pink lady's-slipper found in a dry wood near Westerly! It seemed to me such an odd flower, with its rosy pouch or bag, and I was pleased with Bay's name for it of whippoorwill's shoes. He gathered the whole plant, giving me the flower on its slender stalk, but keeping the fibrous root among his choicest treasures as "good for narves and high strikes."

What had he among his herbs which was

not "good for" some ailment or other? And what wonderful tales he could tell of his marvellous cures! I remember many of these stories still; and so, as I go through the country, I find my botanical knowledge strongly mingled with reminiscences of the henbane and plantain poultice that cured Enoch Wilcox and "kep' off lockjaw when the crab bit his toe;" of the dandelion-tea, so beneficial for "old Mis' Dewey's janders," and the Indian turnip, which, boiled in milk and "took fastin'," soothed Mary Bright's "creakin' cough."

As I do not remember when I first saw Botany Bay, so I cannot recall at what stage of our comradeship I began to define in my own young mind what made him so different from other people. He was generally regarded as insane, alluded to as "crazy Balaam," avoided and feared by children as a dangerous lunatic. But I soon saw that he was not like other madmen. There was "wild Jimmy," the Scotchman, kept by his kinsfolk in an attic-room in the small brown house near Windmill Point, and whose ravings, yells, and unearthly peals of laughter rang out on moonlight

nights, striking terror to my soul. There was Vashti, with her tall, commanding figure, flashing black eyes, and fine features, her shrewd, scarcely incoherent talk, full of humorous incongruities. And every one in the village knew Zaccheus, that harmless eccentric, with his unkempt hair and strangely patched, party-colored garments, who muttered to himself as he carried his baskets and brooms through the streets, or stood in the door of his caboose-house in the evening. Botany Bay was not at all like these. He was taciturn, reticent; but when he talked of his plants there was no sign of insanity, no incoherency or wandering. I do not think he could read or write; he knew nothing of any botanical systems or artificial classifying of plants, but he had a sort of system of his own, and by some curious instinct seemed to recognize kinship between certain herbs, which in later years I found were placed in one family by more scientific men—not closer observers.

Yet there was something wrong in Bay's brain. My childish mind was conscious of it but could not define it. There was a strange

minor key in all his tones, a certain sadness underlying his happiest moods. When exultant over a new discovery, a long-sought flower, a deep-buried root of wondrous virtues, his child-smile of big-eyed delight would suddenly, swiftly fade, and a strange, mingled look of perplexity, fear, and melancholy take its place. By-and-by I went further in my analysis, and noticed what made his talk so odd and puzzling. This was the frequent recurrence of such expressions as "t'other," "him," "that un," and like phrases, not apparently referring to anything else in his sentences, or to any one I knew.

"I'm awful glad to git this wild-ginger," he would say, as he dug up the aromatic root of the asarum, with its singular wine-colored flowers almost hidden under the earth; "old Square Wheeler's tryin' to swear off chewin'. It gives him spells now, an' he's had warnin's o' numb palsy. But he can't swear off on anything but wild-ginger root. He's tried cammermile an' rheubarb an' lots o' things, but he goes on hankerin' for terbacky. I'm plaguy glad to git this"—all this with a

smile, or rather chuckle, of pleasure. Then a shadow would fall on the thin, wizened, brown face, and in a lower tone, with a kind of pathetic ring in it, he would say, "I wonder if *he's* found it this year, hope he has," and with a heavy sigh the spicy treasure, but with half its flavor gone, seemingly, for Bay, would be dropped into the basket. Or while cutting, in autumn, the witch-hazel twigs with their late, out-of-season, unflowerlike yellow blossoms, he would murmur: "I'd be sot up with gettin' these, to steep for Lodowick Pen'leton's lame arm, if 't wa'n't for t'other. I'm awfully 'fraid he ain't got any this fall." That I did not, for a long time, ask the meaning of these references shows me now that I recognized in them an element of mystery, something out of the common, which somehow awed and silenced me.

I remember well the day when the explanation came. We had been roaming about the lower part of the village, gathering jimsonweed, the stramonium of botany and pharmacy. It grew very plentifully in waste places there, with its large whitish or pale violet funnel-shaped flowers and coarse leaves, and

we soon had all we wanted. As the summer twilight came on we wandered down to the Point, near the old light-house, and finally seated ourselves on the rocks there, and looked out over the water. There had been one of those wonderful sunsets of crimson and gold so well known to old Stonington, and believed by her inhabitants to be quite unknown elsewhere (old Captain Seth used to tell me it was "owin' to the salt in the air, which kinder fetched the colors out an' sot 'em"). A little sail-boat in the distance—a homely thing enough when at the dock, and with the broad unfaltering light of noonday upon its scarred and dingy sides, stained and patched sail—now seemed a fairy shallop of rose and gold, and on this boat Botany Bay's blue, melancholy eyes were fixed. "*He* might be in that boat," he said at last, "might jest as well be there's anywheres; jest's likely to be, fortino;" and then as I looked up at the dreary sound in his voice I saw, to my amaze and distress, big tears on the brown face. I could not stand that. I laid my fingers on the sleeve of his ragged coat, and whispered:

"What's the matter, Bay?" I think he was glad to have me ask him. I think he had pined for a confidant; at any rate he turned quickly towards me, and in a strangely solemn, sad voice, the very tones of which I seem to hear as I recall the scene, he said:

"Aleck, did ye know there was two o' me?"

I scarcely understand now what there was in those words to frighten me so. Perhaps it was the tone and manner of the speaker, our surroundings of sea and sky, as well as the mysteriousness of the words themselves, which alarmed me, only a boy at the time; but I shivered with sudden fear.

"Don't be scaret, Aleck," he said, soothingly. 'Tain't nothin' new. I've knowed it years. Ye ain't scaret at me; an' he's jest the same."

"Who is, Bay?" I said, in a frightened whisper, my teeth almost chattering.

"Him," he answered, slowly, "t'other. That other *me*, ye know;" and gradually the story was told.

Many years before, how long Bay did not know, a sailor, temporarily in Stonington, while his ship was unloading, had told the

simple herbalist a strange thing. He had said that somewhere far away there was another Botany Bay, another Balaam, in every respect the same as this one. His name, his looks, his pursuit, were all just the same. This is what Bay understood him to say. Whether the man was trying to impose upon the poor boy's credulity, whether in his broken tongue—for he was a foreigner—he only intended to say that he had seen a person who resembled the plant-vender, or again, if perchance he was superstitiously inclined and himself believed in this strange double, I know not. At any rate, Bay accepted the tale as true, and it colored all his after-life. If he was happy and exultant over some simple conquest in the plant world, his joy was at once shadowed by the thought that "t'other" was, perhaps, denied that pleasure. If troubled, if cold or hungry, or persecuted by the boys, he was jealous lest "t'other" was better off and free from these annoyances. He was always brooding over the existence of this other self, sometimes when lonesome rejoicing in the twinship which seemed to give him something all his own, a more than friend

or even brother, sometimes hating the thought of this shadow of his he could not escape, oftenest of all fearing with a strange fear this weird, mysterious duplicate of himself. After my first alarm on hearing this strange story the terror subsided, and I began soothing and comforting my poor friend.

"I don't see what makes you so afraid, Bay," I said, as we still sat on the rocks and talked that night. "What is there so dreadful in a man's looking just like you?"

"'Tain't that, Aleck," he replied. "'Tain't jest that he favors me, but he *is* me, an' I'm him, an' we're both on us each other. It's dreffle, dreffle."

"But how can it be, Bay? How could it have happened?"

"Well, I didn't use to know 'bout that myself. But I've ciphered it out now, an' this's the way on it. I see Cap'n Pollard's little gal one day, Lois, you know, settin' on the stoop, cuttin' out figgers out o' paper with her ma's scissors, an' she went to cut out a man with a peaked hat on, an' all of a suddent she says: 'Why, look here, I got two on 'em 'stead o'

one.' An' I see she'd doubled her paper 'thout knowin' it, an' so she'd got two men jest kezackly alike, peaked hat an' all. An' then in a jiffy it come over me that was how it happened with him an' me; God got the stuff doubled, you see, an' when he went to cut me out—or him, whichever 'twas he meant to make—he made two on us. I guess he didn't find it out till 'twas too late, or he wouldn't ha' let it go. Or mebbe he thought he'd throwed one away, but it—I mean him—or me—got off somehow. But 'twas a dreffle mistake, an' can't never, never be sot right."

His voice had a hopeless ring in it, and his blue eyes were misty as he looked off to sea. It was growing dark, and one by one the lights came out on Fisher's Island, Montauk Point, and farther to the westward, on the Hummocks.

"How *could* it be sot right?" he went on. "Mebbe you think if one on us died, 'twould fix it. But about his soul, how's that? When we was made double—by mistake—nobody to blame, you know—there couldn't ha' been but one soul pervided for. I was raised re-

spectable on 'lection an' foreordination, jest's you was, Aleck, an' so I know that air soul was 'lected to heaven or 'tother place, an' whichever died fust would take that place pervided for Balaam Montm'rency's soul. Ther' couldn't be two men 'lected guv'nor o' Connecticut, could ther'? No more could ther' be two souls to the same man 'lected to one place."

"Oh, Balaam!" I cried, in dismay; "I can't follow you; I'm all mixed up."

"So'm I, Aleck, an' so's him, dreffle mixed; that's the trouble."

From that night Bay and I were closer friends than ever. I knew his secret now, and he was glad I knew it. We often talked of "t'other," and passed hours in vain surmises and imaginings as to his fate. Although I knew the whole situation was impossible, and existed only in poor Bay's weak brain, still there was a fearful fascination for me in the subject, and I loved to dwell upon it.

"Would you like to see him, Balaam?" I asked one day.

Bay shook and brushed the earth from some

fine large roots of the ginseng he had just been digging, as he said, doubtfully, "I don't hardly know. Sometimes I think I would, an' then agin I ain't so sure. To see yourself comin' up to ye jest careless like, 's if 'twas somebody else, would be pretty scary, out of a lookin'-glass. But agin there's times when I want him bad; seem's if I must have him; 's if I wasn't a hull man without him, but on'y a piece o' one, half a pair o' scissors, you know, or one leg o' these trowses."

"But, Bay," I said, with a sudden thought, "it isn't any worse than twins. Don't you know Bill and Bob Hancox are twins, and they look so much alike nobody but their mother knows them apart."

"I've thought o' that," Bay replied, "but it ain't the same. They was meant to be in pairs, like pijin berries, or two-fingered grass. They've got two souls, an' there's a place for 'em both—one for Bob Hancox and one for Bill Hancox—in heaven or t'other place; I'm afraid Bill's place is the bad un, for he's a plaguey troublesome chap; but *us*, we ain't twins, we're *each other*, don't ye see?"

I did not see exactly, but that there was a difficulty too mighty to be explained away by my young self I realized too well. One summer's day we were walking near the "Road meeting-house." Bay had been gathering Indian tobacco, one of the lobelias, and discoursing upon its nature and properties. According to him, although a powerful "pison," yet when steeped and combined with certain other "yarbs" it had performed wonderful cures.

"There's 'nother kind," he said, "somethin' like this, only it's a good deal taller, an' 's got big spikes o' blooms, real blue, an' han'some. They call that the High Beelyer, 'cause this small little one's the Low Beelyer, ye know, an' it's good for the blood, like sas'p'rilla an' dock."

We sat down to rest on the church steps, and were silent for a time. Then Bay said: "I wish I was a perfessor; b'longed to the Church, ye know; I might get a sight o' comfort that way. But I can't be, 'tain't no use. I come pretty near it once. I was at the Baptist meetin' one Sunday night, an' there was a big revival, an' Elder Swan was preachin'. I was awful stirred up, an' seem'd 's if I'd foun' a

way out o' all my troubles. But all on a sudden I thought o' 'tother one. I mos' know he's a heathen, for the man that told me about him he was a Portugee or Kanaka, an' mos' likely he'd seed t'other Balaam over in them parts. So I jest thought 'twould be pretty mean for me, with my priv'leges, born in a Christian land an' raised in Stonin'ton Borough, to take advantage of t'other poor heathen Bay just because he'd happened to be brought up 'mong id'ls an' things, an' take his chance away. So I gin' it up."

I cannot describe fully all the phases of feeling through which Bay passed after I knew his story. But sure am I that after doubt, fear, repulsion, dread, sorrow, and pity, he came at last into a great and tender love for this strange other self. I do not think that he had ever before loved a human being. As far as I could find out he had no memory of father, mother, brother, or sister, and had hitherto led a friendless, lonesome life. So he had learned no expressions of endearment, no fond words, no pet names. Such had never been addressed to himself, nor had he ever used them. But

he loved, in a certain fashion, his plants, and this helped him now. He grew more eccentric, odder than ever, was more by himself, and was always talking in a low tone, even when quite alone. The village folk said that he was "madder'n a hatter," "crazier'n a coot," but I did not think so. He was only talking to his other self, for I often heard such words as these:

"Poor Bay, poor t'other Bay, don't mind me, don't be scaret as I uster be, 'cause there's two o' ye. Some meddlin' loon's up an' told ye, I s'pose, an' ye feel bad; don't, now, *don't.*"

Then his voice would sink almost to a whisper as he would say:

"Why, I love ye, Bay, I love ye; I love your peaked, pindlin' face, an' your yeller mussed-up hair, an' them silly blue eyes o' yourn. Ye see I know jest how ye look. I've got a bit o' lookin'-glass now, an' I carry it 'round an' keep lookin' in it, an' I can see us jest 's plain. Don't be 'feard on me; I wouldn't no more hurt ye than I'd hurt the vilets or venuses-prides in the spring."

But more and more, as this strange love

grew, did the poor man grieve—agonize almost—over that other's soul, and its ultimate state. His ideas of heathendom were vague, and derived principally from what he had heard at the "Monthly Concerts" of the Baptist church, intensified by the pictures in illustrated missionary papers distributed at the same meetings. He sometimes fancied that "t'other Bay" was discussing this matter with him, and I would hear him say, as if in response to another voice:

"Yer a heathen, ye say? That ain't no matter. How could ye help bein', out there where ye b'long? Never min', poor old Bay, *I* don't care 'bout yer id'ls, an' yer throwin' babies to the crockerdiles, an' layin' down on the railroad track to let the Jockanock train run over ye, an' all that. I'd a done it, too, if 'twas the fash'n in the Borough here. That's what they sing over to Baptist meetin',

> "'The heathens in their blinders
> Bows down to wooden stuns.'

'Course they do; they don't know no better. But then, Bay, 'tain't a good thing to do, an' I wouldn't if I was you. O, Lord, I *am* you, I

clean forgot. But won't ye try not to do it—can't ye swear off, Bay?"

Again and again, as the months rolled on, Balaam would talk with me of this matter, always dwelling now upon the point that there was but one place "pervided for Balaam Montm'rency's soul," and consequently but one of the two Bays could have a place at all.

"But," I ventured to ask one day, "what becomes of the other soul, Bay?"

"Why, it jest goes out."

"Out where?" I naturally asked.

"Jest where the light of a taller can'le goes when ye snuff it out, or the inside of a puff-ball when ye squeeze it, that's where. There ain't no soul no more; it's just stopped bein'."

The more the love for "t'other Bay" grew and deepened, the more the trouble and perplexity increased. How could he help this other—how could he set right this mighty difficulty?

One November day I had arranged to meet my friend just outside the village, and go out to the Baldwin Farm to dig gold-thread roots. It was late in the season, but Uncle David Doty

was suffering with a sore mouth, and his supply of gold-thread—a certain cure—was nearly exhausted, and Botany Bay knew well how to find the little plant, even when snow was on the ground, by its glossy, evergreen, strawberry-like leaf, which told that under the earth were the bright yellow thread-like roots of bitter virtue. As I came to the place of meeting, Bay was waiting, and I at once saw that he was strangely excited. His thin brown face was pale, his big blue eyes wild, his lips worked nervously.

"Aleck, Aleck," he said, excitedly, as soon as I drew near, "I've had a message!"

"Who from, Bay?" I asked.

"Why, from him, from poor Bay, dear old Balaam. I thought there was suthin' comin', an' I've been thinkin' an' contrivin' what 'twould be, an' this mornin' as I was comin' down the road I see old Thankful Bateese, the Injun woman. She's a mighty cur'us creeter, an' they say she has dealin's, an' she was in a field all by herself, an' she was a-walkin' roun' an' roun' suthin' on the ground, an' kinder singin'. An' I lissened, an'—oh, Aleck, I heerd the words."

He stopped, and caught his breath with a half sob.

"What was it?" I asked, eagerly, sharing his excitement.

Still pale and trembling, he began chanting, in a strange, monotonous way, these rude rhymes:

"Ther's room for one, but ther' ain't for two,
Ther's no room for me if ther's room for you;
If ye wanter save me, jest up an' say
Ye'll gimme your chance, an' get outer the way."

As he crooned the words, swaying his body and moving his head from side to side, I was at once reminded of the old squaw, so well known in the village, and her peculiar way of chanting some strange gibberish, quite unintelligible to any of us. It at once struck me that Bay had construed the Indian jargon in his own way, prompted by his one pervading thought.

"Are you sure she said that?" I asked. "I never could understand the words of anything she sings."

"*I* never could afore, Aleck, but I heerd this

jest as plain. 'Twas Bay, t'other Bay, speakin' right through her. An' now I know what I've got ter do."

"Oh, what, Bay?" I asked, anxiously, drawing nearer to him.

"Why, don't ye see? I've got ter up an' say I'll gin him my chance, an' git outer the way," and his voice again fell into the strange chant.

"But who'll you say it to, Bay?"

His face fell, and a puzzled look came over it, as he said, hesitating and troubled:

"Why—why—to him—no, I can't reach him—oh, Aleck, what shall I do? what shall I do?" and he threw himself upon the ground in an agony of sorrow and bewilderment. At that moment I saw the old Indian woman coming along the road, and dashed after her. But I failed utterly in making her respond satisfactorily to my inquiries as to her song and what it meant. She threatened me, with alarming guttural sounds and wild gesticulations, and I ran away frightened.

I returned to my friend, and finally succeeded in persuading him to go on with me towards

the farm, after our golden treasure. We talked long and earnestly as we went on through the gray November day.

"Ye see, Aleck," said Balaam at last, "it must be *my* soul that's 'lected—I was allers afraid 'twas—an' he's foun' it out, an' he sees a way out on it, if I 'wanter save him,' he says. Wanter! Oh, Bay!" and there was such a depth of tenderness in the voice. It seemed as if all the love he might under other conditions have given to father, mother, wife, or child, had gone into this one affection.

"But, Bay," I said, full of love and pity for my friend, "I don't want you to give up to him this way. Why should you?"

"Why, Aleck, I wanter; I'd love ter. I never had anybody to take keer on, or set by, or gin up ter, but him, an' I love it. I don't guess he sets so much by me; likely's not he's got folks —a fam'ly, mebbe—an' he wants me outer the way, body an' soul, both on 'em. He don't want me 'roun' here, or takin' his place there, an' I don't blame him a mite. But it's different with me. He's all the folks I've got, an' I'm dreffle glad ter do a little suthin for him.

I won't say that I ain't sometimes kinder felt 's if I'd like ter see them places they tell about at meetin', an' Scripter speaks on. Ye ain't a religious boy, Aleck; that ain't cum yit with ye; so I can't talk much about that, an' tell you all my reas'ns, the whys an' whuffers; but anyway you'll understand how I'd like to see them plants an' things growin' there Elder Peckham told about, that heals the nations, an' them trees bearin' a dozen diffunt kin's o' fruits—grafted, mebbe—an' them 'never-witherin' flowers' in the hymn-book—everlastin's I 'spose. But, law, 'tain't wuth talkin' about. I'd do more'n that for him, poor chap. Jest to go out, you know, an' not to be 'roun' any more; that ain't much."

In spite of myself I could not help talking as if the situation was a real one. I had lived so long with Bay in this strange story of another self that it was very real to me, and I could hardly bear the thought of this terrible sacrifice, this strange, paradoxical, unselfish self-love, this self-abnegatory immolation for another self. But I could do nothing.

We had gathered our roots, and were resting

under the lee of a large bowlder, when again Bay began his bewildering talk as to how he could effect this renunciation, to whom he could "up an' say" that he would gladly resign his chance for the other's sake. Suddenly, as we leaned against the rock, there came from overhead something like a cry. To this day I do not know what it was. It may have been the call of some belated bird fallen behind his migrating comrades, the scream of an eagle or hawk, but to Bay's excited brain it seemed a message from Heaven. He listened intently a moment, his pale face glowed, and he cried:

"O' course, o' course! I'd oughter knowed it. Thank the Lord, I know now."

"Oh, Bay, tell me, tell me, what is it?"

"Why, that there voice showed me how. Don't ye see that wh'ever made the mistake fust—made us double, ye know—he's the one to fix it now? He'll be glad enough to have the thing sot right an' off his mind, an' if I go an' tell him 's well as I know how that I ain't goin' to stan' in any one's way—that he can count me out—why, the thing 'll be squared

somehow." He was in a state of trembling excitement.

"Go home, Aleck, that's a good boy," he said, hurriedly; "I want ter be by myself a spell; I'll come down bimeby."

He took up his basket, crossed the road, entered a piece of woods, and was soon out of sight among the leafless trees. I was frightened, and after a few minutes I stole after him, and went a little way into the woods. Suddenly I heard a voice, and involuntarily stopped to listen. I shall not tell you what I heard. I was not, as Botany Bay truly said, a religious boy—perhaps I am not a religious man; but there was something about what came to my ears in that gray and lonesome wood which filled me with awe then, and has ever since seemed to me a sacred, solemn thing. He was talking to some one, as man to man; he was telling that some one in homely phrase, which yet carried in it a terrible earnestness, of his willingness to give up his place here and hereafter—as he had often expressed it to me to "stop bein'"—to have everything go on as if there had been but one Bay, and that

one "t'other." He did not ask that this might be; he made no petition, offered no plea. He spoke as if only his expression of willingness was lacking to make the thing a fact, to complete the sacrifice.

Boy as I was, I felt that I was on holy ground, and stole away. I would go home, I thought, but to-morrow I would, at the risk of seeming to betray a confidence, ask advice of some older, wiser person.

As I came down into the village it grew grayer and more black, and soon there were snow-squalls, a sure sign there of increasing cold. And cold it grew, bitterly cold. As I sat in front of our blazing wood fire that evening I thought much of Bay, and longed for the morning. I should know better what to say to him now that I had thought the matter over, and if I could not convince him myself, why, I should go to Mr. Clifford, the minister. He would know what to say. The morning came clear and cold, sharply cold for that early season, and thoughts of skating and 'Lihu's Pond came first to me as I woke in my warm bed. Then I remembered Bay. As soon as I

could I ran up the street and down the little lane opposite the doctor's to Bay's small brown house. He was not there; the neighbors said he had not been there since yesterday morning. I hurried to David Doty's, down the back street towards the Point, but he had not brought to the old man the promised gold-thread. Thoroughly alarmed, I ran home and told my fears, and soon our team was ready, and my father and I, with faithful Elam, our "help," were on our way to the woods where I had last seen poor Bay.

It did not take long to find him; he did not try to hide away. There he was, lying close at hand and very still. At first we thought that he was dead. Then he showed some signs of life, and we lifted him tenderly and carried him to our home. No pains were spared to resuscitate him; good Dr. Hines worked faithfully and untiringly, and by-and-by the eyelids trembled and were lifted.

There was a look of dazed wonderment at first; then a faint light flickered over the small, quaint, brown face, and the lips moved. We bent to listen. In a faint, broken whisper he said:

"Ther's room for one, but ther' ain't for two. But—ther' ain't—two now, Bay; you're the—one—an' I'm—goin' out. I'm dreffle glad, Bay."

The big blue eyes opened with a sudden smile, like that of a little child, but withal so wise and deep, and Bay was still. The soul had "gone out." Had it "stopped bein'?"

III.

AUNT RANDY.

"*Which things are an allegory.*"

Gal. iv. 24.

AUNT RANDY.

We were on the Landaff Valley road, only a mile or two out from Franconia village. Nathan was driving, while Pirate and Corsair (Nathan would always call the latter Horsehair), in defiance of their reckless names, lounged lazily along the road. It was June, and the season was a little late, but along the margins of the streams the early buttercups were shining all golden in the sun, the tiarella sent up feathery spikes of white, and in the woods the painted trilliums—the "Benjamins" of the country-folk—were unfolding their delicate pink and white flowers. The bunchberry made mounds of creamy bloom at the roots of ancient trees; star-flower, anemones and goldthread, starred the woods; and in the swamps toothwort, marsh-marigold, and purple avens were growing.

Again and again were the horses—always obliging in this matter—made to stop by the

peculiar sound, something between hiss, roll, and cluck, which to the Franconia steed means "Whoa!" and I jumped out to secure some tall stalk of baneberry flowers, a branch of hobble-bush, or red-berried elder, to gather a fragrant bunch of smilacina or a few white violets.

Just as I had returned to the carriage after one of these raids, and the horses had started up in a sudden spurt of speed, "too bright to last," I saw an odd sight. In the small garden back of a house past which we were flying was a woman who conducted herself in the strangest manner. Though apparently rather elderly, she was dashing frantically about, her wide cap-border flapping around her face, her limp calico gown twisted about her ankles by the breeze, and her long arms waving in the air. In one hand she held what looked to me, as I was hurried by, like a banner of dingy white on a long pole, and with this she performed the wildest antics. Now it was waved aloft, while its bearer stood on tiptoe, and even sprang into the air, head bent backward and face upturned; then it sank to the ground, or

was trailed over the vegetable-beds. Standing up in the carriage and looking back eagerly, I could see this wild dance continue, until suddenly the flag was quickly lowered or dashed to the ground, and the strange standard-bearer threw herself down beside it in a crouching attitude, and seemed to clasp its folds in her skinny hands.

"Nathan! Nathan!" I cried, breathless. "What is it? Oh, who is she?"

"Aunt Randy."

"But what is the matter with her? Is she crazy?"

Nathan stooped to pick up a branch of fly-honeysuckle which had fallen from the seat, as he answered, impassively, "Guess not; no more'n most women."

"But what is she doing?"

"Ketchin' butterflies."

"Oh!" cried I, drawing a long breath, expressive of both disappointment and relief. "I see; that was a net she was holding, and she is a collector."

I am a woman of hobbies myself, and had lately taken up entomology with some ardor,

so I felt at once interested in this congenial being, and questioned Nathan with new zeal. I soon knew all he had to tell, which was but little. The woman had come to Franconia a few years before from North Woodstock. She was dressed in black, looked pale and wretched, and seemed to be alone in the world. She lived by herself in the little white house where we saw her, and "didn't seem to take no notice of no one." She avoided the neighbors, shut herself up in dark rooms, never went to "meetin'" or "sewin' s'ciety" or any such gathering, and refused to admit the minister or other friendly visitors. But there was a sudden change. One summer day she was seen in a field near her house "chasin' a yeller butterfly," and after that she was a different being.

"She took to all kinds o' live flyin' an' crawlin' an' hoppin' creeters," the story went on. "She'd spend a hull day runnin' after butterflies and millers, and huntin' for bugs an' caterpillers an' spiders an' hoppergasses. An' nights she'd be scootin' round with a lantern to ketch them big hairy things like bats that

flop into lights. An' she'd keep her winder open every evenin', and start up an' kite 'round the room with that kinder fish-net, an' ketch every blamed thing that come in. An' she begun to take notice o' people—children fust; an' she'd ask the boys an' girls to come in an' see her live things, an' she'd talk real nice to 'em—good's a book. An' somehow she's different every way, pleasanter-spoken an' contented like. Some folks thinks she's crazy, an' she does act dreffle queer sometimes. But there's crazier people outside the 'sylums than Aunt Randy."

"Is she married? Has she a family?"

"Well, folks say she's a widder, an' her husband was a bad lot. She never says nothin' about him, an' she don't think no great o' men-folks. Her name's Mis' Gates, an' Randy's short for Mirandy; but I tell folks she's so independent, an' sot on not belongin' to no man, she won't let any one call her My anything, so she's left it off o' Randy."

It was not long before I made the acquaintance of the odd entomologist. I think she recognized in me a kindred spirit, saw that I

too liked "flyin' an' crawlin' an' hoppin' creeters," and so met my advances more readily. The boys were devoted anglers that summer, and there were trout to be found in Landaff River. So we would all drive down the valley road, stop in some pleasant shady spot, and leaving the horses under Nathan's faithful though sometimes drowsy care, amuse ourselves in various ways. The boys were happy for hours together with their rods and lines. I wandered about after butterflies and moths, and invariably ended by stopping before Aunt Randy's door.

Strange as it may appear, Aunt Randy had not only never seen a book about insects, but she had never even known, until she met me, that such books existed. She had never met an entomologist or any one interested in the study of her favorites, and all her information was derived from her own experience. So her talk was fresh and delightful, and quite free from polysyllabic terms and the ever-changing nomenclature of the study as we find it in books. I remember that the first thing I ever carried to her for identification was a butter-

fly. It was the large dark chocolate one with pale yellow borders, known as the Antiopa. Now I confess I knew its name and something of its habits, but I wished to test Aunt Randy's knowledge. As she saw it her rugged face lighted up with a smile of recognition, and taking it gently from my hands, as though she were touching a baby, she said:

"Ah, you peart little feller! Held out to this time, did ye? If you ain't hardy an' full o' pluck, I don't know who is. Ye see"—looking up at me—"this kind stands the winter right through."

"Yes," I answered, perhaps a trifle patronizingly, "it hibernates, I know."

She looked a little puzzled, but went on: "I don't know about that, but he jest gets along somehow through our cold Francony winters. Sometimes I find 'em stickin' to the rafters, or snuggled two or three together in a hole between the stones o' the old wall there, or inside the shed, or in the wood-pile, lookin' 's if they was dead as door-nails. But come to bring 'em in by the fire, or hold 'em a spell in my hands, they come to life agin. An' warm

sunny days they'll go crawlin' round, an' in the spring, when the frost goes out o' the ground, an' the weather gets settled, they come out for good. But they're pretty hard-lookin' then, an' they don't live long arter layin' their eggs, an' the second crop don't come round till along the fust o' August or thereabouts."

"What is its name?" I asked.

"Waal, I don't know this one by his fust name; he's a stranger to me—come from further down the road, I guess. The fam'ly name I give 'em is Tough, 'cause they stan' the cold so well, but I don't know all their given names. Lizy an' Mary Ann spent the winter under the stone out there by the wall, an' Caleb stayed in the shed, but I've lost sight of 'em now, though" (looking around towards the garden) "I thought I see Wilbur jest now out by the fence."

Shades of Linnæus and Hubner forgive her! Vanessa antiopa vulgarized into Mary Ann Tough!

One day I found her in the little garden, holding a saucer carefully in her hands, while a ragged specimen of the common cream-

colored butterfly of our vegetable gardens, Pieris rapæ, sipped at the contents.

"Posies is so scarce jest now," she said, softly, without moving or looking up, lest she should disturb her fluttering guest, "that I bring out sugar'n water for 'em once 'n a while. This one 's dreffle fond o' surrup, an' can't never get too much. This is one o' the Cabbagers, 's I call 'em, 'cause o' what they raise their young ones on. Her folks live 'round here, an' she was born an' reared jest back o' the house. Why, I rec'lect jest 's well as anything when she was a mite of a caterpillar that couldn't do nothin' but crawl an' eat. I tell ye, she an' her brothers an' sisters did make the cabbage-leaves fly; I never see nothin' like 'em for that sort o' garden sass—cold slaw, 's ye might call it. An' now Malviny—that's her given name—has forgot her beginnin's, an' won't take nothin' but sugar, for she 's got a sweet tooth—if butterflies ever have sech things."

"But how do you know Malviny from any other white cabbage butterfly?" I asked.

"How do you know your dog Kent, that

you an' the boys is so fond on, from ary other black curly dog, or your yeller horse, Pirate, there, from ary other long-tailed sorril? For one thing, I know her by that split in her right-hand back wing, an' that rubbed place between her shoulders. But it's her ways I tell her by, mostly; we've all got ways, ye know."

And so she lived on, surrounded by her insect friends, loving them, understanding them, calling each one by his Christian name, and quite happy in their society. There was a big dragon-fly with spotted wings whom she addressed as Horace, and who, she declared, had followed her weeks ago all the way from Streeter's Pond as she drove home with her old mare and the buck-board. And as she dwelt upon the salient points of his character, his sense of humor and comical disposition, while he whizzed about her head, I declare he did look to me quite unlike other dragon-flies. I seemed to see a humorous twinkle in his big eyes, and for the moment firmly believed in Horace's sense of the ludicrous. Aunt Randy and I soon became warm friends, and it was not long before she told me her story. I need

not dwell upon the early part of it. Her married life was a hard one, her husband a shiftless, idle vagabond. She did not apply these epithets, but the facts spoke for themselves. She worked hard, and he spent her earnings at the tavern. They had one child, a boy, and to him the mother's heart clung as to nothing else in earth or heaven. For his sake she struggled on, bore her husband's neglect and ill-treatment, worked for all three, and kept some little remnant of faith and hope in her heart. At last one winter's day her husband went away and never returned. Some weeks later she heard of his death, and was free. Just then a distant relative, of whom she had lost sight for many years, died and left her a little money; so new hope sprang up in her chilled heart. She would take the child, she thought, buy a little place in some quiet village, and leave her wretched past far behind her. Alas for human hopes! Just as the little house in Franconia was secured, and she was about to remove there with her child, the boy sickened and died.

If I should write pages I could not convey

to you, as the few abrupt words of this patient, undemonstrative New England woman conveyed to me, all the tragic meaning of that loss to her. As a child she had lived in a Christian home, and had some religious training, and amid all her trials hitherto she had tried in her poor blind way to believe and trust and think that somehow things were for the best. But now, with this terrible blow, all faith in God and man was killed. She buried the boy with no more thought or hope of a future reunion than has the veriest heathen, left his grave and their old home—a grave, too, now in which all hope and faith were entombed—and came to Franconia, where she lived for months the solitary life of which Nathan had told me, a misanthropic, hopeless soul. Let me try now to tell you in Aunt Randy's own words, as near as may be, how the change came.

"I used to shet myself up here all day an' think. I couldn't have no posy gard'n or anything like that, now the little feller wa'n't here to play in it. An' I couldn't bear to hear the birds singin', 'cause he used to like 'em so,

an' I'd jest shet up my eyes as I went along so's not to see the vi'lets an' dand'lions an' butter-'n'-eggs, an' them posies he used to pick an' fetch in to me in his little fat hands. But one day I had to go down the road a piece, of an errand, an' before I could help it I ketcht sight of a big clump o' fire-weed shinin' all pink in the sun. Now, fire-weed was my boy's fav'rite posy; it growed all round our house in North Woodstock, an' he used to pick it an' fetch in big bunches on it, an' set 'em in the old blue pitcher. He was dreffle fond o' that plant, an' when I see it—well, it all come over me so, I jest bust out cryin' right in the road, an' I was 'fraid somebody 'd see me, so I had to stop an' purtend I was lookin' at the posies. An' as I was stoopin' down a-lookin' an' tryin' to get my handk'chief out, I see a big worm on the fire-weed. 'Twa'n't crawlin' or eatin', but jest settin' up on its hind-legs in the humanest way, with its head up an' its hands out, an'— You'll think I'm an old fool, but what with the wáter in my eyes an' the sun a-dazzlin' me, an' my heart just breakin' for that boy, why, I kinder thought that worm

favored the young one, an' I felt the queerest drawin' to it. I reached out my finger to poke it, an' it put down its head an' drawed its chin in for all the world like that boy when he was scaret an' bashful. I tell ye, from that minnit I 'dopted that creeter an' took him right inter my heart. I hadn't cared for a livin' thing afore sence that little coffin went out my front gate, an' I tell ye 'twas good to feel that drawin' towards suthin'. I picked the plant he was on, an' I carried him home jest 's careful, an' then I fixed a box o' dirt an' stuck the plant in, an' jest let it alone till he'd got kind of acquainted like. But, dear me! he made friends to once; he never tried to get away; he never was off his vittles from the minnit he come. The fust time I see him eat my heart come right up in my mouth, he et so like my boy, jest bitin' little bites right reg'lar round an' round a leaf till he'd made a place the shape o' half a cent, like the boy'd do with his cooky. I named him Jacob after the other, an'— Oh, I can't tell ye what a comfort he was to me! I hadn't had no pervidin' to do for so long, but now I had to go down the road every single

mornin' an' get fresh fire-weed for Jacob to eat. I put a cup o' water for him too, but I never see him drink. I guess he licked the water off the leaves, for I used to wet 'em to make 'em tasty an' temptin'. Another thing that made him look like the boy was his color. He was kind o' blacky-green, with round pink spots on his sides, for all the world like my other Jacob in his little tight jacket with the glass buttons I made for him outer my old invisible green dress. An' he had a little pink face, an' he used to look up at me so peart an' knowin' when I'd talk to him. 'Twas a new thing to me, after all them lonesome months, to have some one at home waitin' for me when I was out, an' I used to hurry back 's quick 's I could jest 's if the boy was watchin' at the winder with his pretty little nose all flat agin the glass.

"I had a stick stan'in' up in his box, an' a big piece o' mosquiter nettin' over it like a tent, but I only kep' it shet down when I was out, an' nights, for I didn't want him to think he was locked up, an' every night at bedtime I'd go an' draw down that nettin' snug an' tie a

string round the bottom, an' look in last thing to see if he was all right. You'd scarcely b'lieve how that tuckin' in helped me after I'd been without it such a spell.

"'Twas gettin' late in the season—'twas the fust day o' September I took him—an' I begun to think about the winter, an' how I should make Jacob comfortable. I thought I'd move inter the front bedroom, where there was a stove, an' take him right in there to sleep. An' as for food, why, I'd dig up a lot o' fire-weed an' set it out in pots, an' keep him in vittles till spring. I'd found by this time that he wouldn't eat nothin' else: he was real set in his ways. I tried him on the nicest things—rose leaves an' buttercups an' lavender an' diffunt yarbs—but he'd jest smell at 'em an' turn away, an' look for his fire-weed. That was so like the boy! If he wanted gingerbread, he wanted it; an' dough-nuts, nor jumbles, nor sour-milk cake, nor not even meat-pie would do—he must have gingerbread or nothin'.

"Well, I might 's well come to the wust sooner 's later. One day I see Jacob didn't

seem like hisself; he stopped eatin', an' went crawlin' round 's if he wanted suthin' he hadn't got. I give him water an' fresh fire-weed; I set him by the north winder where the wind blew in, for 'twas a hot day; but nothin' did any good. All day he went crawlin' round, restless an' fev'rish like, never eatin' nothin', nor takin' any notice o' anything. I set up by him all night long, my heart 's heavy as lead, for I was goin' over again them dreffle days when my boy took sick. Just at daylight he crawled down onto the ground an' lay there a spell, an' then I heerd him a-rustlin' about, an' when I looked he was kinder diggin' in the ground, pickin' up little bits o' dirt an' throwin' 'em about. 'It's like pickin' at the bedclothes,' I says, my heart a-sinkin' 'way down. So he went on for hours diggin', diggin'. I put him up on the leaves lots o' times, but he'd crawl right down agin, so I let him alone 't last. Bimeby I see he'd made quite a little hole, an' all on a suddent it come into my head he was makin' a grave.

"An' he was. Slow an' sure he dug, an' crawled in 's he dug, an' I sat watchin' hour

after hour, an' cryin' my poor old heart out over him. An' late in the afternoon he'd finished his work, an' buried hisself, jest leavin' a little hole at his head; an' he put up his little pink face an' looked at me so human-like, an' then he reached out an' took a little lump o' dirt an' pulled it over the hole, an' he was gone, an' I hadn't anything left in all the world but my two graves!"

The old woman stopped and wiped her eyes before she could go on, and I assure you that I forgot the hero of her story was nothing but a caterpillar, and found my own eyes wet.

"Well," she at last proceeded, "I didn't disturb him. Seemed 's if God had some way o' tellin' dumb creeters when they was to die, an' so I tied the nettin' down over his box an' left him there.

"I better not say much about that time. 'Twas a bad spell. My heart, that had got kind o' soft an' warm with somethin' to love an' take care on, got hard an' frozen agin, an' oh, the hard thoughts I had o' God for takin' my last comfort away, an' lettin' both my little Jacobs go away to lay for ever 'n' ever in the

dark an' cold! The spring-time came, an' I hated it; an' oh, I dreaded the time when the fire-weed would come out all pink an' bright, with him not there no more to eat it, nor my curly-headed boy to pick it! One summer day—I sha'n't never forget it 's long 's I live—I was standin' by Jacob's little grave (I'd always kep' his box in my room jest 's it was), when I see the dirt had got shook off the top, an' the poor little body, all dried up an' brown now, was kinder oncovered. I was jest a-goin' to cover it up agin softly, when I see a little crack come on it, an'—oh, I can't tell it all out in this slow, quiet way! I wish 't could come on you as it did on me that blessed day—Jacob was comin' to life agin! he was—he was! I watched him, never touchin' or speakin' to him—though I jest ached to help—till the end come, an' he was big an' beautiful, brown an' buff an' pink, an' with wings! Oh, Mis' Burton, I can't put it inter words how I felt when I see Jacob come out o' his very grave an' spread his wings an' fly round my room, nor how I cried right out loud as I see it: 'Why not my boy too? O Lord, you can do that jest 's easy 's this!'"

I left Franconia at the end of summer, and during the winter months heard nothing from the little snow-bound village. But when June came again I sought, as for twenty years I have sought, the grand old mountains—old but ever new. One of my earliest visits was to the little white house of Aunt Randy. I spied my old friend in the garden, and felt sure she was having a friendly gossip with some winged friends. I passed through the gate to join her, and as I did so saw a man sitting on the doorsteps. He was unmistakably of the genus tramp, had a mean, sly face, with light shifting eyes, and looked a thorough vagabond. I wondered at his presence there, but forgot it instantly in the pleasure of meeting again my old comrade. She knew me at once, and her rugged face, thinner and more worn than when I last saw her, brightened as she met me. After a few words of greeting she asked me to come into the house, and we were soon seated in the familiar room, the scene of Jacob's death and apotheosis.

"Did you see him?" she suddenly asked, with a jerk of her head towards the front door.

"I saw a man outside," I replied.

"It's him," she went on, quietly—"my husband, ye know—Mr. Gates. He wa'n't dead; 'twas a mistake, somehow; an' he come home las' winter!"

For a minute I was speechless, and before I could decide what to say, whether to congratulate or condole with my friend, she spoke again:

"I can speak plain to you, for I got to feel so to home with you las' summer, an' ye'll understan' me. When I see him comin' in one day, ragged, an' dirty, an'—well, smellin' o' liquor some—I *wa'n't* glad to see him. There was things I couldn't disremember, somehow; an' I'd thought he was dead an' gone, an' got used to it; an'—I didn't seem to want him. Then—'twas kinder mean of me, but I thought he'd heerd o' the little property I'd come into, an' mebbe he was arter that, an' I kinder hardened my heart. But when I see how sickly an' peaked he looked, an' what a holler cough he had, an' how poor an' mis'rable he was, I begun to feel a little more Christian-like. So I took him in an' done for him. I nussed him,

got him new clo'es, fed him up, kep' him warm an' comfort'ble, an' "—with one of her quaint sudden smiles, which always reminded me of one of those quick darting bits of sunlight which come at times, you know not how, over old Lafayette's rocky brow—"an' I finished up by gettin' kinder fond on him. Now, Mis' Burton," she said, more gravely, "he's never had no 'dvantages. He never took no notice o' worms or sech creeters, an' had no idee what caterpillars turned inter or outer; an' as for dead things, be they worms or folks, they was dead, to his thinkin', for goodenall. So I considered all that, an' made 'lowances, an' I begun to learn him religion, little at a time. I didn't use no Bible; he wouldn't ha' stood that —none o' his fam'ly ever would; they ain't Scripter folks, the Gateses ain't. But I told him all about the crawlin' an' flyin' creeters an' their ways, an' held 'em up as Christian 'xamples to humans; how they went about their bizness so stiddy an' reg'lar, an' pervided for their fam'lies, an' built their own houses, an' was always to home, an' how forehanded they was, lookin' ahead an' layin' up vittles for their

child'en who's to come arter 'em, an' all them things, ye know. An' las' of all, I told him 'bout Jacob. Ye see he liked that boy of ourn better'n he ever liked anything else, an' I never let on to the boy that there was anything out o' the way with his pa; so the little feller reely set by Mr. Gates. An' when the frost got outer the groun' this spring I wanted to take up the boy an' bring him over from North Woodstock, an' keep him in the graveyard here, nigher by. An' I took Mr. Gates along; an' as we was bringin' the little coffin home I jest told him that story about the other body and the mir'cle I see with my own eyes."

"And was he impressed by it?" I asked, as she paused for breath.

"Well, I don' know. He's got sorter wa-t'ry eyes nat'rally—all the Gateses have—but I kinder thought they was wetter'n common when I got through, but 'twas a blowy day; an' he was real car'ful about liftin' the coffin, an' when the men was helpin' fill up the grave he stood close by, an' I heerd him ask 'em not to put so much dirt on top, nor stomp it down hard, an' I s'mised he was thinkin' o'

the risin', an' plannin' how the little feller'd come out."

The hard, work-worn hands brushed something from the thin cheek as she spoke, and I thought that even the "Gateses" by marriage seemed sometimes to have "wat'ry eyes."

"But his cough grows hollerer an' hackier, Mis' Burton, an' Dr. Sankey tells me he ain't long for this world! an' oh, I'm so dreffle pleased he come home when he did, an' didn't die without any preparin', or hearin' 'the gospil's joyful soun',' as my old mother useter sing. A queer gospil, ye may say, but I never heerd a better sermon preached by Elder Garrick or Father Howe than that blessed caterpillar o' the church preached to me when he broke outer the grave that res'rection day last July. An' I tell ye when I'm talkin' caterpillars and bugs an' such, I throw in, without scarin' him, a good deal o' Scripter religion too, an' he knows mighty well—or 'tain't my fault—who's behind it all, an' respons'ble for their goin's on an' all the good in 'em. An' "—with her queer quick smile again—"I do a heap o' prayin' for him he never has the faintest idee on. It's

mean, I hold, to pray *at* a man, but's long as he don't know what I'm doin' it can't hurt him, an' it's a dreffle relief to me.

"An' he's improvin' on it, an' I've got hopes on him, Mis' Burton. I've seen wuss caterpillars 'n him turn inter real sightly flyin' things, not the best nor han'somest, mebbe, not big green an' buff angels like Jacob, but suthin' with wings, 'tennerate, an' that's a good deal. There was a fat, logy, whitish worm I knew once, with a blue streak down his back, that lived on a white birch across the road. His name was Ad'niram Judson Birch, an' I had big hopes o' him—thought he was goin' to be a big stripid butterfly; he et enough to make one a foot across—but he hadn't any ambition or fac'lty, somehow—jest et an' stuffed, an' never got on—an' he only come out a kind of a sawfly, without any bright colors on him, or feathers, or anything. But he had wings. I tell ye there's wings in us all 'f we could see 'em. An' when Mr. Gates gits off his caterpillar skin, an' comes up an' shakes the dirt all off, I ain't goin' to be one mite ashamed on him, 's long as he's got wings."

I was called away unexpectedly from the mountains a few days after this interview, and did not return that year. Nathan, a rare and reticent correspondent, wrote me a few weeks after my departure as follows:

"Old Gates, Aunt Randy's wuthless husband, pegged out last week. Good riddunse! Don't need a Yanky to guess where he's gone."

But I try to forget the one glimpse I had of the mean, sly face and cringing figure, and remember only dear old Aunt Randy's faith and prayers, and her simple creed: "There's wings in us all 'f we could see 'em."

IV.

FISHIN' JIMMY.

"*He leadeth me beside the still waters.*"

Psalm xxiii. 2.

FISHIN' JIMMY.

It was on the margin of Pond Brook, just back of Uncle Eben's, that I first saw Fishin' Jimmy. It was early June, and we were again at Franconia, that peaceful little village among the northern hills.

The boys, as usual, were tempting the trout with false fly or real worm, and I was roaming along the bank, seeking spring flowers, and hunting early butterflies and moths. Suddenly there was a little plash in the water at the spot where Ralph was fishing, the slender tip of his rod bent, I heard a voice cry out, "Strike him, sonny, strike him!" and an old man came quickly but noiselessly through the bushes just as Ralph's line flew up into space, with, alas! no shining, spotted trout upon the hook. The new-comer was a spare, wiry man of middle height, with a slight stoop in his shoulders, a thin brown face, and scanty gray hair. He carried a fishing-rod, and had some small trout strung on a forked stick in one

hand. A simple, homely figure, yet he stands out in memory just as I saw him then, no more to be forgotten than the granite hills, the rushing streams, the cascades of that north country I love so well.

We fell into talk at once, Ralph and Waldo rushing eagerly into questions about the fish, the bait, the best spots in the stream, advancing their own small theories, and asking advice from their new friend; for friend he seemed even in that first hour, as he began, simply but so wisely, to teach my boys the art he loved. They are older now, and are no mean anglers, I believe, but they look back gratefully to those brookside lessons, and acknowledge gladly their obligations to Fishin' Jimmy. But it is not of these practical teachings I would now speak; rather of the lessons of simple faith, of unwearied patience, of self-denial and cheerful endurance which the old man himself seemed to have learned, strangely enough, from the very sport so often called cruel and murderous. Incomprehensible as it may seem, to his simple intellect the fisherman's art was a whole system of morality, a guide for every-

day life, an education, a gospel. It was all any poor mortal man, woman, or child needed in this world to make him or her happy, useful, good.

At first we scarcely realized this, and wondered greatly at certain things he said, and the tone in which he said them. I remember, at that first meeting, I asked him, rather carelessly, "Do you like fishing?" He did not reply at first; then he looked at me with those odd, limpid, green-gray eyes of his which always seemed to reflect the clear waters of mountain streams, and said, very quietly, "You wouldn't ask me if I liked my mother—or my wife." And he always spoke of his pursuit as one speaks of something very dear, very sacred. Part of his story I learned from others, but most of it from himself, bit by bit, as we wandered together day by day in that lovely hill-country. As I tell it over again I seem to hear the rush of mountain streams, the "sound of a going in the tops of the trees," the sweet, pensive strain of white-throat sparrow, and the plash of leaping trout; to see the crystal-clear waters pouring over granite rock, the

wonderful purple light upon the mountains, the flash and glint of darting fish, the tender green of early summer in the north country.

Fishin' Jimmy's real name was James Whitcher. He was born in the Franconia Valley, and his whole life had been passed there. He had always fished; he could not remember when or how he learned the art. From the days when, a tiny, barelegged urchin in ragged frock, he had dropped his piece of string with its bent pin at the end into the narrow, shallow brooklet behind his father's house, through early boyhood's season of roaming along Gale River, wading Black Brook, rowing a leaky boat on Streeter's or Mink Pond, through youth, through manhood, on and on into old age, his life had apparently been one long day's fishing—an angler's holiday. Had it been only that? He had not cared for books or school, and all efforts to tie him down to study were unavailing. But he knew well the books of running brooks. No dry botanical text-book or manual could have taught him all he now knew of plants and flowers and trees.

He did not call the yellow spatterdock Nuphar advena, but he knew its large leaves of rich green, where the black bass and pickerel sheltered themselves from the summer sun, and its yellow balls on stout stems, around which his line so often twined and twisted, or in which the hook caught, not to be jerked out till the long, green, juicy stalk itself, topped with globe of greenish gold, came up from its wet bed. He knew the sedges along the bank with their nodding tassels and stiff lance-like leaves, the feathery grasses, the velvet moss upon the wet stones, the sea-green lichen on bowlder or tree-trunk. There, in that corner of Echo Lake, grew the thickest patch of pipewort, with its small, round, grayish-white, mushroom-shaped tops on long, slender stems. If he had styled it Eriocaulon septangulare, would it have shown a closer knowledge of its habits than did his careful avoidance of its vicinity, his keeping line and flies at a safe distance, as he muttered to himself, "Them pesky butt'ns agin!" He knew by sight the bur-reed of mountain ponds, with its round, prickly balls strung like big beads on the stiff,

erect stalks; the little water-lobelia, with its tiny purple blossoms, springing from the waters of lake and pond. He knew, too, all the strange, beautiful under-water growth—bladderwort, in long, feathery garlands, pellucid water-weed, quillwort, in stiff little bunches with sharp-pointed leaves of olive-green—all so seldom seen save by the angler whose hooks draw up from time to time the wet, lovely tangle. I remember the amusement with which a certain well-known botanist, who had journeyed to the mountains in search of a little plant, found many years ago near Echo Lake, but not since seen, heard me propose to consult Fishin' Jimmy on the subject. But I was wiser than he knew. Jimmy looked at the specimen brought as an aid to identification. It was dry and flattened, and as unlike a living, growing plant as are generally the specimens from an herbarium. But it showed the awl-shaped leaves, and thread-like stalk with its tiny round seed-vessels, like those of our common shepherd's-purse, and Jimmy knew it at once. "There's a dreffle lot o' that peppergrass out in deep water there, jest where I

ketched the big pick'ril," he said, quietly. "I seen it nigh a foot high, an' it's jucier an' livin'er than them dead sticks in your book." At our request he accompanied the unbelieving botanist and myself to the spot, and there, looking down through the sunlit water, we saw great patches of that rare and long-lost plant of the cruciferæ known to science as Subularia aquatica. For forty years it had hidden itself away, growing and blossoming and casting abroad its tiny seeds, in its watery home, unseen, or at least unnoticed, by living soul except by the keen, soft, limpid eyes of Fishin' Jimmy. And he knew the trees and shrubs so well: the alder and birch, from which as a boy he cut his simple, pliant pole; the shad-blow and iron-wood (he called them, respectively, sugar-plum and hardhack), which he used for the more ambitious rods of maturer years; the mooseberry, wayfaring-tree, hobble-bush, or triptoe—it has all these names —with stout, trailing branches, over which he stumbled as he hurried through the woods and underbrush in the darkening twilight.

He had never heard of entomology. Gué-

née, Hübner, and Fabricius were unknown names, but he could have told these worthies many new things. Did they know just at what hour the trout ceased leaping at dark fly or moth, and could see only in the dim light the ghostly white miller? Did they know the comparative merits, as a tempting bait, of grasshopper, cricket, spider, or wasp; and could they, with bits of wool, tinsel, and feather, copy the real dipterous, hymenopterous, or orthopterous insect? And the birds: he knew them as do few ornithologists, by sight, by sound, by little ways and tricks of their own, known only to themselves and him. The white-throat sparrow, with its sweet, far-reaching chant; the hermit-thrush, with its chime of bells, in the calm summer twilight; the vesper-sparrow, that ran before him as he crossed the meadow, or sang for hours, as he fished the stream, its unvarying but scarcely monotonous little strain; the cedar-bird, with its smooth brown coat of Quaker simplicity, and speech as brief and simple as Quaker yea or nay; the winter-wren, sending out his strange, lovely, liquid warble from the high,

rocky side of Cannon Mountain; the bluebird of that early spring, so welcome to the winter-weary dwellers in that land of ice and snow, as he

"from the bluer deeps
Lets fall a quick prophetic strain"

of summer, of streams freed and flowing again, of waking, darting, eager fish—all these were friends, familiar, tried, and true to Fishin' Jimmy. The cluck and coo of the cuckoo, the bubbling song of bobolink in buff and black, the watery trill of the stream-loving swamp-sparrow, the whispered whistle of the stealthy, darkness-haunting whippoorwill, the gurgle and gargle of the cow-bunting—he knew each and all, better than did Audubon, Nuttall, or Wilson. But he never dreamed that even the tiniest of his little favorites bore in the scientific world, far away from that quiet mountain nest, such names as Troglodytus hiemalis or Melospiza palustris. He could tell you, too, of strange, shy creatures rarely seen except by the early-rising, late-fishing angler, in quiet, lonesome places: the otter, muskrat, and mink of ponds and lakes—rival fishers, who bore off

prey sometimes from under his very eyes—field-mice in meadow and pasture, blind, burrowing moles, prickly hedgehogs, brown hares, and social, curious squirrels.

Sometimes he saw deer, in the early morning or in the dusk of the evening, as they came to drink at the lake shore, and looked at him with big, soft eyes not unlike his own. Sometimes a shaggy bear trotted across his path and hid himself in the forest, or a sharp-eared fox ran barking through the bushes. He loved to tell of these things to us who cared to listen, and I still seem to hear his voice saying, in hushed tones, after a story of woodland sight or sound: "Nobody don't see 'em but fishermen. Nobody don't hear 'em but fishermen."

But it was of another kind of knowledge he oftenest spoke, and of which I shall try to tell you in his own words, as nearly as possible.

First let me say that if there should seem to be the faintest tinge of irreverence in aught I write, I tell my story badly. There was no irreverence in Fishin' Jimmy. He professed a deep and profound veneration for all things spiritual and heavenly; but it was the venera-

tion of a little child, mingled as is that child's with perfect confidence and utter frankness. And he used the dialect of the country in which he lived.

"As I was tellin' ye," he said, "I allers loved fishin', an' knowed 'twas the best thing in the hull airth; I knowed it larnt ye more about creeters an' yarbs an' stuns an' water than books could tell ye; I knowed it made folks patienter an' common-senser an' weather-wiser, an' cuter gen'ally; gin 'em more fac'lty than all the school larnin' in creation. I knowed it was more fillin' than vittles, more rousin' than whiskey, more soothin' than lodlum; I knowed it cooled ye off when ye was het, an' het ye when ye was cold; I knowed all that, o' course—any fool knows it. But—will ye bleeve it?—I was more'n twenty-one year old, a man growed, 'fore I foun' out why 'twas that away. Father an' mother was Christian folks, good out-an'-out Calv'nist Baptists from over East'n way. They fetched me up right, made me go to meetin' an' read a chapter every Sunday, an' say a hymn Sat'day night a'ter washin'; an' I useter say my prayers mos' nights. I wa'n't a

bad boy as boys go. But nobody thought o' tellin' me the one thing, jest the one single thing that'd ha' made all the diffunce. I knowed about God, an' how he made me an' made the airth, an' everything; an' once I got thinkin' about that, an' I asked my father if God made the fishes. He said course he did, the sea an' all that in 'em is; but somehow that didn't seem to mean nothin' much to me, an' I lost my int'rist agin. An' I read the Scripter account o' Jonah an' the big fish, an' all that in Job about pullin' out levi'thing with a hook an' stickin' fish-spears in his head, an' some parts in them queer books nigh the end o' the ole Test'ment about fish-ponds an' fish-gates an' fish-pools, an' how the fishers shall l'ment—everything I could pick out about fishin' an' sech; but it didn't come home to me; 'twa'n't my kind o' fishin', an' I didn't seem ter sense it.

"But one day—it's more'n forty year ago now, but I rec'lect it same's 'twas yest'day, an' I shall rec'lect it forty thousand year from now if I'm round, an' I guess I shall be—I heerd—suthin'—diffunt. I was down in the village one Sunday; it wa'n't very good fishin'—the

streams was too full; an' I thought I'd jest look into the meetin'-house 's I went by. 'Twas the ole union meetin'-house, ye know, an' they hadn't got no reg'lar s'pply, an' ye never knowed what kind ye'd hear, so 'twas kind o' excitin'.

"'Twas late, most 'leven o'clock, an' the sarm'n had begun. There was a strange man a-preachin', some one from over to the hotel. I never heerd his name, I never seed him from that day to this; but I knowed his face. Queer enough, I'd seed him a-fishin'. I never knowed he was a min'ster; he didn't look like one. He went about like a real fisherman, with ole clo'es, an' an ole hat with hooks stuck in it, an' big rubber boots, an' he fished, reely fished, I mean—ketched 'em. I guess 'twas that made me liss'n a leetle sharper 'n us'al, for I never seed a fishin'-min'ster afore. Elder Jacks'n, he said 'twas a sinf'l waste o' time; an' ole Parson Loomis, he'd an idee it was cruel an' onmarciful; so I thought I'd jest see what this man 'd preach about, an' I settled down to liss'n to the sarm'n.

"But there wa'n't no sarm'n, not what I'd

been raised to think was the on'y true kind. There wa'n't no heads, no fustlys nor sec'ndlys, nor fin'ly bruthrins, but the fust thing I knowed I was hearin' a story, an' 'twas a fishin' story. 'Twas about Some One—I hadn't the least idee then who 'twas, an' how much it all meant—Some One that was dreffle fond o' fishin' and fishermen, Some One that sot everythin' by the water, an' useter go along by the lakes an' ponds, an' sail on 'em, an' talk with the men that was fishin'. An' how the fishermen all liked him, an' asked his 'dvice, an' done jest 's he telled 'em about the likeliest places to fish; an' how they allers ketched more for mindin' him; an' how when he was a-preachin' he wouldn't go into a big meetin'-house an' talk to rich folks all slicked up, but he'd jest go out in a fishin'-boat an' ask the men to shove out a mite, an' he'd talk to the folks on shore, the fishin' folks, an' their wives, an' the boys an' gals playin' on the shore. An' then, best o' everythin', he telled how when he was a-choosin' the men to go about with him an' help him, an' larn his ways, so's to come a'ter him, he fust o' all picked out the

men he'd seen every day fishin'; an' mebbe fished with hisself, for he knowed 'em, an' knowed he could trust 'em.

"An' then he telled us about the day when this preacher come along by the lake—a dreffle sightly place, this min'ster said; he'd seed it hisself when he was trav'lin' in them countries—an' come acrost two men he knowed well; they was brothers, an' they was a-fishin'. An' he jest asked 'em, in his pleasant-spoken, frien'ly way—there wa'n't never sech a drawin', takin', lovin' way with any one afore as this man had, the minister said—he jest asked 'em to come along with him; an' they lay down their poles an' their lines an' everythin', an' jined him. An' then he come along a spell farther, an' he see two boys out with their ole father, an' they was settin' in a boat an' fixin' up their tackle, an' he asked 'em if they'd jine him too, an' they jest dropped all their things, an' left the ole man with the boat an' the fish an' the bait, an' follered the preacher. I don't tell it very good. I've read it an' read it sence that, but I want to make ye see how it sounded to me, how I took it, as the min'ster telled

it that summer day in Francony meetin'. Ye see I'd no idee who the story was about, the man put it so plain, in common kind o' talk, without any come-to-passes an' whuffers an' thuffers, an' I never conceited 'twas a Bible narr'tive.

"An' so fust thing I knowed I says to myself, 'That's the kind o' teacher I want. If I could come acrost a man like that, I'd jest foller him too, through thick an' thin.' Well, I can't put the rest on it into talk very good; 'tain't jest the kind o' thing to speak on 'fore folks, even sech good friends as you. I ain't the sort to go back on my word—fishermen ain't, ye know—an' what I'd said to myself, 'fore I knowed who I was bindin' myself to, I stuck to a'terwards when I knowed all about him. For 'tain't for me to tell ye, who've got so much more larnin' than me, that there was a dreffle lot more to that story than the fishin' part. That lovin', givin' up, sufferin', dyin' part, ye know it all yerself, an' I can't kinder say much on it, 'cept when I'm jest all by myself, or—'long o' him.

"That a'ternoon I took my ole Bible that I

hadn't read much sence I growed up, an' I went out into the woods 'long the river, an' 'stid o' fishin' I jest sot down an' read that hull story. Now ye know it yerself by heart, an' ye've knowed it all yer born days, so ye can't begin to tell how new an' 'stonishin' 'twas to me, an' how findin' so much fishin' in it kinder helped me unnerstan' an' bleeve it every mite, an' take it right hum to me to foller an' live up to 's long 's I live an' breathe. Did j'ever think on it, reely? I tell ye, his r'liging's a fishin' r'liging all through. His friends was fishin'-folks; his pulpit was a fishin'-boat, or the shore o' the lake; he loved the ponds an' streams; an' when his d'sciples went out fishin', if he didn't go hisself with 'em he'd go a'ter 'em, walkin' on the water, to cheer 'em up an' comfort 'em.

"An' he was allers round the water; for the story'll say, 'he come to the sea-shore,' or 'he begun to teach by the sea-side,' or, agin, 'he entered into a boat,' an' 'he was in the stern o' the boat, asleep.'

"An' he used fish in his mir'cles. He fed that crowd o' folks on fish when they was hungry, bought 'em from a little chap on the shore.

I've oft'n thought how dreffle tickled that boy must 'a' been to have him take them fish. Mebbe they wa'n't nothin' but shiners, but the fust the little feller'd ever ketched, an' boys set a heap on their fust ketch. He was dreffle good to child'en, ye know. An' who'd he come to a'ter he'd died an' ris agin? Why, he come down to the shore 'fore daylight, an' looked off over the pond to where his ole frien's was a-fishin'. Ye see they'd gone out jest to quiet their minds an' keep up their sperrits; ther's nothin' like fishin' for that, ye know, an' they'd been in a heap o' trubble. When they was settin' up the night afore, worryin' an' wond'rin' an' s'misin' what was goin' ter become on 'em without their master, Peter'd got kinder desprit, an' he up an' says, in his quick way, says he, 'Anyway, *I*'m goin' a-fishin'.' An' they all see the sense on it—any fisherman would—an' they says, says they, 'We'll go 'long too.' But they didn't ketch anythin'. I suppose they couldn't fix their minds on it, an' everythin' went wrong like. But when mornin' come creepin' up over the mountings, fust thin' they knowed they see him on the

bank, an' he called out to 'em to know if they'd ketched anythin'. The water jest run down my cheeks when I heerd the min'ster tell that, an' it kinder makes my eyes wet every time I think on't. For 't seems 's if it might 'a' been me in that boat, who heern that v'ice I loved so dreffle well, speak up agin so nat'ral from the bank there. An' he eat some o' their fish! O' course he done it to set their minds easy, to show 'em he wa'n't quite a sperrit yit, but jest their own ole frien' who'd been out in the boat with 'em so many, many times. But seems to me, jest the fac' he done it kinder makes fish an' fishin' diffunt from any other thing in the hull airth. I tell ye them four books that gin his story is chock full o' things that go right to the heart o' fishermen: Nets an' hooks an' boats, an' the shores an' the sea an' the mountings, Peter's fishin'-coat, lilies an' sparrers an' grass o' the fields, an' all about the evenin' sky bein' red or lowerin', an' fair or foul weather.

"It's an out-doors, woodsy, country story, 'sides bein' the heav'nliest one that was ever telled. I read the hull Bible, as a duty, ye

know. I read the epis'les, but somehow they don't come home to me. Paul was a great man, a dreffle smart scholar, but he was raised in the city, I guess, an' when I go from the gospils into Paul's writin's it's like goin' from the woods an' hills an' streams o' Francony into the streets of a big city like Concord or Manch'ster."

The old man did not say much of his afterlife and the fruits of this strange conversion, but his neighbors told us a great deal. They spoke of his unselfishness, his charity, his kindly deeds; told of his visiting the poor and unhappy, nursing the sick. They said the little children loved him, and every one in the village and for miles around trusted and leaned upon Fishin' Jimmy. He taught the boys to fish, sometimes the girls too; and while learning to cast and strike, to whip the stream, they drank in knowledge of higher things, and came to know and love Jimmy's "fishin' r'liging." I remember they told me of a little French-Canadian girl, a poor, wretched waif, whose mother, an unknown tramp, had fallen dead in the road near the village. The child, an

untamed little heathen, was found clinging to her mother's body in an agony of grief and rage, and fought like a tiger when they tried to take her away. A boy in the little group attracted to the spot ran away, with a child's faith in his old friend, to summon Fishin' Jimmy. He came quickly, lifted the little savage tenderly, and carried her away.

No one witnessed the taming process, but in a day or two the pair were seen together on the margin of Black Brook, each with a fish-pole. Her dark face was bright with interest and excitement as she took her first lesson in the art of angling. She jabbered and chattered in her odd patois, he answered in broadest New England dialect, but the two quite understood each other, and though Jimmy said afterwards that it was "dreffle to hear her call the fish pois'n'," they were soon great friends and comrades. For weeks he kept and cared for the child, and when she left him for a good home in Bethlehem, one would scarcely have recognized in the gentle, affectionate girl the wild creature of the past. Though often questioned as to the means used to effect this

change, Jimmy's explanation seemed rather vague and unsatisfactory. "'Twas fishin' done it," he said; "on'y fishin'; it allers works. The Christian r'liging itself had to begin with fishin', ye know."

But one thing troubled Fishin' Jimmy. He wanted to be a "fisher of men." That was what the Great Teacher had promised he would make the fishermen who left their boats to follow him. What strange, literal meaning he attached to the terms we could not tell. In vain we—especially the boys, whose young hearts had gone out in warm affection to the old man—tried to show him that he was, by his efforts to do good and make others better and happier, fulfilling the Lord's directions. He could not understand it so. "I allers try to think," he said, "that 'twas me in that boat when he come along. I make bleeve that it was out on Streeter's Pond, an' I was settin' in the boat, fixin' my lan'in'-net, when I see him on the shore. I think mebbe I'm that James—for that's my given name, ye know, though they allers call me Jimmy—an' then I hear him callin' me, 'James,

James!' I can hear him jest 's plain sometimes, when the wind's blowin' in the trees, an' I jest ache to up an' foller him. But, says he, 'I'll make ye a fisher o' men,' an' he ain't done it. I'm waitin'; mebbe he'll larn me some day."

He was fond of all living creatures, merciful to all. But his love for our dog Dash became a passion, for Dash was an angler. Who that ever saw him sitting in the boat beside his master, watching with eager eye, and whole body trembling with excitement, the line as it was cast, the flies as they touched the surface —who can forget old Dash? His fierce excitement at rise of trout, the efforts at self-restraint, the disappointment if the prey escaped, the wild exultation if it was captured, how plainly — he who runs might read — were shown these emotions in eye, in ear, in tail, in whole quivering body! What wonder that it all went straight to the fisher's heart of Jimmy! "I never knowed afore they could be Christians," he said, looking, with tears in his soft, keen eyes, at the every-day scene, and with no faintest thought of irreverence. "I never knowed it, but I'd give a stiffikit o'

membership in the orthodoxest church goin' to that dog there."

It is almost needless to say that as years went on Jimmy came to know many "fishin'-min'sters," for there are many of that ilk who love our mountain country, and seek it yearly. All these knew and loved the old man. And there were others who had wandered by that Sea of Galilee, and fished in the waters of the Holy Land, and with them Fishin' Jimmy dearly loved to talk. But his wonder was never-ending that in the scheme of evangelizing the world more use was not made of the "fishin' side" of the story. "Hain't they ever tried it on them poor heathen?" he would ask earnestly of some clerical angler casting a fly upon the clear water of pond or brook. "I should think 'twould 'a' ben the fust thing they'd done. Fishin' fust, an' r'liging 's sure to foller. An' it's so easy; for heathen mostly r'sides on islands, don't they? So ther's plenty o' water, an' o' course ther's fishin'; an' oncet gin 'em poles an' git 'em to work, an' they're out o' mischief for that day. They'd like it better'n cannib'ling, or cuttin' out idles, or scratchin'

picters all over theirselves, an' bimeby — not too suddent, ye know, to scare 'em—ye could begin on that story, an' they couldn't stan' that, not a heathen on 'em. Won't ye speak to the 'Merican Board about it, an' sen' out a few fishin' mishneries, with poles an' lines an' tackle gen'ally? I've tried it on dreffle bad folks, an' it allers done 'em good. But"—so almost all his simple talk ended—"I wish I could begin to be a fisher o' men; I'm gettin' on now—I'm nigh seventy—an' I ain't got much time, ye see."

One afternoon in July there came over Franconia Notch one of those strangely sudden tempests which sometimes visit that mountain country. It had been warm that day, unusually warm for that refreshingly cool spot; but suddenly the sky grew dark and darker, almost to blackness; there was roll of thunder and flash of lightning, and then poured down the rain—rain at first, but soon hail in large frozen bullets, which fiercely pelted any who ventured out-doors, rattled against the windows of the Profile House with sharp cracks like sounds of musketry, and lay upon the piazza in heaps like snow. And in the midst of the

wild storm it was remembered that two boys, guests at the hotel, had gone up Mount Lafayette alone that day. They were young boys, unused to mountain climbing, and their friends were anxious. It was found that Dash had followed them; and just as some one was to be sent in search of them, a boy from the stables brought the information that Fishin' Jimmy had started up the mountain after them as the storm broke. "Said if he couldn't be a fisher o' men, mebbe he knowed 'nuff to ketch boys," went on our informant, seeing nothing more in the speech, full of pathetic meaning to us who knew him, than the idle talk of one whom many considered "lackin'." Jimmy was old now, and had of late grown very feeble, and we did not like to think of him out in that wild storm. And now suddenly the lost boys themselves appeared through the opening in the woods opposite the house, and ran in through the hail, now falling more quietly. They were wet, but no worse, apparently, for their adventure, though full of contrition and distress at having lost sight of the dog. He had rushed off into the woods some hours

before, after a rabbit or hedgehog, and had never returned; nor had they seen Fishin' Jimmy.

As hours went by, and the old man did not return, a search party was sent out, and guides familiar with all the mountain paths went up Lafayette to seek for him. It was nearly night when they at last found him, and the grand old mountains had put on those robes of royal purple which they sometimes assume at eventide. At the foot of a mass of rock, which looked like amethyst or wine-red agate in that marvellous evening light, the old man was lying, and Dash was with him. From the few faint words Jimmy could then gasp out the truth was gathered. He had missed the boys, leaving the path by which they had returned, and while stumbling along in search of them, feeble and weary, he had heard far below a sound of distress. Looking down over a steep rocky ledge, he had seen his friend and fishing comrade, old Dash, in sore trouble. Poor Dash! He never dreamed of harming his old friend, for he had a kind heart. But he was a sad coward in some matters, and a very baby when frightened and away from master and

friends. So I fear he may have assumed the role of wounded sufferer when in reality he was but scared and lonesome. He never owned this afterwards, and you may be sure we never let him know by word or look the evil he had done. Jimmy saw him holding up one paw helplessly, and looking at him with wistful, imploring brown eyes; heard his pitiful, whimpering cry for aid, and never doubted his great distress and peril. Was Dash not a fisherman? And fishermen, in Fishin' Jimmy's category, were always true and trusty. So the old man, without a second's hesitation, started down the steep, smooth decline to the rescue of his friend.

We do not know just how or where in that terrible descent he fell. To us who afterwards saw the spot, and thought of the weak old man, chilled by the storm, exhausted by his exertions, and yet clambering down that precipitous cliff, made more slippery and treacherous by the sleet and hail still falling, it seemed impossible that he could have kept a foothold for an instant. Nor am I sure that he expected to save himself and Dash too. But he tried.

He was sadly hurt. I will not tell you of that.

Looking out from the hotel windows through the gathering darkness, we who loved him—it was not a small group—saw a sorrowful sight. Flickering lights thrown by the lanterns of the guides came through the woods. Across the road, slowly, carefully, came strong men, bearing on a rough, hastily made litter of boughs the dear old man. All that could have been done for the most distinguished guest, for the dearest, best-beloved friend, was done for the gentle fisherman. We, his friends, and proud to style ourselves thus, were of different, widely separated lands, greatly varying creeds. Some were nearly as old as the dying man, some in the prime of manhood. There were youths and maidens and little children; but through the night we watched together. The old Roman bishop, whose calm, benign face we all know and love; the Churchman, ascetic in faith, but with the kindest, most indulgent heart when one finds it; the gentle old Quakeress, with placid, unwrinkled brow and silvery hair; Presbyterian, Methodist, and

Baptist—we were all one that night. The old angler did not suffer—we were so glad of that! But he did not appear to know us, and his talk seemed strange. It rambled on quietly, softly, like one of his own mountain brooks, babbling of green fields, of sunny summer days, of his favorite sport, and ah, of other things. But he was not speaking to us. A sudden, awed hush and thrill came over us as, bending to catch the low words, we all at once understood what only the bishop put into words as he said, half to himself, in a sudden, quick, broken whisper, "God bless the man, he's talking to his Master!"

"Yes, sir, that's so," went on the quiet voice; "'twas on'y a dog, sure 'nough; 'twa'n't even a boy, as ye say, an' ye ast me to be a fisher o' men. But I hain't had no chance for that, somehow; mebbe I wa'n't fit for't. I'm on'y jest a poor old fisherman—Fishin' Jimmy, ye know, sir. Ye useter call me James—no one else ever done it. On'y a dog? But he wa'n't jest a common dog, sir; he was a fishin'-dog. I never seed a man love fishin' mor'n Dash." The dog was in the room, and heard his name.

Stealing to the bedside, he put a cold nose into the cold hand of his old friend, and no one had the heart to take him away. The touch turned the current of the old man's talk for a moment, and he was fishing again with his dog friend. "See 'em break, Dashy! See 'em break! Lots on 'em to-day, ain't they? Keep still, there's a good dog, while I put on a diffunt fly. Don't ye see they're jumpin' at them gnats? Ain't the water jest 'live with 'em? Ain't it shinin' an' clear an'—" The voice faltered an instant, then went on: "Yes, sir, I'm comin'—I'm glad, dreffle glad to come. Don't mind 'bout my leavin' my fishin'; do ye think I care 'bout that? I'll jest lay down my pole ahin' the alders here, an' put my lan'in'-net on the stuns, with my flies an' tackle—the boys 'll like 'em, ye know—an' I'll be right along.

"I mos' knowed ye was on'y a-tryin' me when ye said that 'bout how I hadn't been a fisher o' men, nor even boys, on'y a dog. 'Twas a—fishin'-dog—ye know—an' ye was allers dreffle good to fishermen—dreffle good to everybody—died—for—'em, didn't ye?

"Please wait—on—the—bank there a minnit; I'm comin' 'crost. Water's pretty—cold this—spring—an' the stream's risin'—but—I—can—do it—don't ye mind—'bout—me, sir. I'll—get—acrost." Once more the voice ceased, and we thought we should not hear it again this side that stream.

But suddenly a strange light came over the thin face, the soft gray eyes opened wide, and he cried out with the strong voice we had so often heard come ringing out to us across the mountain streams, above the sound of their rushing: "Here I be, sir! It's Fishin' Jimmy, ye know, from Francony way; him ye useter call James when ye come 'long the shore o' the pond an' I was a-fishin'. I heern ye agin, jest now—an' I—straightway—f'sook—my—nets—an'—follered—"

Had the voice ceased utterly? No; we could catch faint, low murmurs, and the lips still moved. But the words were not for us; and we did not know when he reached the other bank.

V.

BUTTERNEGGS.

"I had a sister
Whom the blind waves and surges have devour'd."

Twelfth Night.

BUTTERNEGGS.

SHE was a woman of nearly seventy, I should think; tall, thin, and angular, with strongly marked features and eyes of very pale blue. Her hair, still dark, though streaked with gray, was drawn back from her temples and twisted into a little hard knot behind, and she wore no cap. We had scarcely exchanged greetings before her eyes fell upon my modest bouquet.

"Butterneggs, I declare for't!" she exclaimed, with lively interest; "fust I've seed this seas'n; mine don't show a speck o' blowth yet, an' mine's gen'lly fust. Where'd it grow, ma'am, 'f I may ask?"

I told her of the spot near Buttermilk Falls where we had found it, but did not think it necessary to inform her that we had gone there in search of the plant at Jane's suggestion, that the sight of it might prompt the old woman to tell a certain tale. I begged her at once to accept the flowers, which she did

with evident pleasure, placing the homely little nosegay carefully in water. For a vase she used a curious old wineglass, tall and quaint, far more desirable in my eyes than a garden full of the common yellow flowers it held, and I bent forward eagerly to examine it. Aunt Loretty seemed to regard my interest as wholly botanical in its nature, and centred upon her beloved Linaria vulgaris, and I at once rose in her estimation.

"It's a sightly posy, ain't it, ma'am?" she said; "jest about the likeliest there is, I guess. But then it's heredit'ry in our fam'ly, so o' course I like it."

"Hereditary!" I exclaimed, forgetting for a moment my promise to take things quietly, showing no surprise or incredulity. "Butter-and-eggs hereditary in your family!"

"Yes, ma'am, 'tis; leastways the settin' by't is. All the Knappses set ev'rything by butterneggs. Ye can't be a Knapp—course I mean our branch o' the fam'ly—ye can't be one o' our Knappses an' not have that plant with its yeller blooms an' little, narrer, whity-green leaves for yer fav'rite. The Knappses allers

held it so, an' they allers will hold it so, or they won't be Knappses. Didn't I never tell ye," she asked, turning to my companion, "'bout my sister, an' losin' her, an' the way I come to find her?"

I do not remember just how Jane evaded this direct question, but her reply served the desired purpose, and Aunt Loretty was soon started upon her wonderful story.

"My father was Cap'n Zenas Knapp, born right here in Coscob. He follered the sea; an's there warn't much sea 'round here to foller, he moved down Stonin'ton way, an took ter whalin'. An' bimeby he married a gal down there, S'liny Ann Beebe, an' he lost sight an' run o' Coscob an' the Knappses for a long spell. But pa was a Knapp clear through 'f there ever was one; the very Knappiest Knapp, sotespeak, o' the hull tribe, an' that's puttin' it strong 'nough. All their ways, all their doin's, their likin's an' dislikin's, their taketos an' their don't-taketos, their goods an' their bads—he had 'em all hard. An' they *had* ways—the Knappses had, an' they've got 'em still, what's left o' the fam'ly—the waysiest ways! Some

folks ain't that kind, ye know; they're jest like other folks. If ye met 'em 'way from hum ye wouldn't know where they come from or whose relations they was; they might be Peckses o' Horseneck, or Noyses o' West'ly, or Simsb'ry Phelpses; or agin they might be Smithses o' ary place, for all the fam'ly ways they'd got. But our folks, the hull tribe on 'em, was tarred with the same stick, 's ye might say; ye'd 'a knowed 'em for Knappses wherever they was—in Coscob, Stonin'ton, or Chiny. Frinstance, for one thing, they was all Congr'ation'l in religion; they allers had ben from the creation o' the airth. Some folks might say to that that there wa'n't no Congr'ation'l meetin's 's fur back's that. Well, I won't be too sot; mebbe there wa'n't; but 'f that's so, then there wa'n't no Knappses; there *couldn't* be Knappses an' no Congr'ation'lists. An' they all bleeved in foreord'nation an' 'lection. They was made so. Ye didn't have ter larn it to 'em; they got it jest 's they got teeth when 'twas time; they took it jest 's they took hoopin'-cough an' mumps when they was 'round. They didn't, ary one on 'em,

need the cat'chism to larn 'em 'bout 'Whereby for 's own glory He hath foreordained whats'-ever comes to pass,' nor to tell 'em 't 'He out o' His mere good pleasure from all etarnity 'lected some to everlastin' life;' they knowed it theirselves, the Knappses did. An' they stuck to their bleefs, an' would 'a' stood up on the Saybrook platform an' ben burnt up for 'em, like John Rogers in the cat'chism, sayin',

> 'What though this carcass smart a while,
> What though this life decay.'

"An' they was all Whigs in pol'tics. There wa'n't never a Knapp—our branch—who voted the Dem'cratic ticket. They took that too; no need for their pas to tell 'em; jest 's soon 's a boy got to be twenty-one, an' 'lection day come round, up he went an' voted the Whig tick't, sayin' nothin' to nobody. An' so 'twas in ev'rything. They had ways o' their own. It come in ev'n down to readin' the Scripters. For ev'ry Knapp 't ever I see p'ferred the Book o' Rev'lations to ary other part o' the Bible. They liked it all, o' course, for they was a pious breed, an' knowed 't all Scripter's give by insp'ration, an's prof't'ble, an' so forth; but for

stiddy, ev'ry-day readin' give 'em Rev'lations. An' there was lots o' other little ways they had, too, sech as strong opp'sition to Baptists, an' dreffle dislikin' to furr'ners, and the greatest app'tite for old-fashioned, hum-made, white-oak cheese. Then they was all 'posed to swearin', an' didn't never use perfane language, none o' the Knappses; but there was jest one sayin' they had when 'xcited or s'prised or anything, an' that was, 'C'rinthians!' They would say that, all on 'em, 'fore they died, one time or t'other. An' when a Knapp said it, it did sound like the awf'lest kind o' perfan'ty; but o' course it wa'n't. An' 'fore an' over all, ev'ry born soul on 'em took ter flowers an' gard'ns. They would have 'em wherever they was. An' ev'rything they touched growed an' thriv'; drouth didn't dry 'em, wet didn't mould 'em, bugs didn't eat 'em; they come up an' leafed out an' budded an' blowed for the poorest, needin'est Knapp 't lived, with only the teentiest bit of a back yard for 'em to grow in, or brok'n teapots an crackt pitchers to hold 'em. But they might have all the finest posies in the land, roses an' heelyer-

tropes an' verbeny an' horseshoe g'raniums, an' they'd swop 'em all off, ary Knapp would—our branch—for one single plant o' that blessed flower ye fetched me to-day—butterneggs. How 't come about 's more'n I can say, or how long it's ben goin' on—from the very fust start o' things fortino—but 'tennerate ev'ry single Knapp I ever see or heerd on held butterneggs to be the beautif'lest posy God ever made.

"I can't go myself in my rec'lection back o' my great-gran'mother, but I r'member her, though I was a speck of a gal when she died. She was a Bissell o' Nor'field, this State, but she married a Knapp, an' seemed to grow right inter Knapp ways; an' she an' gran'f'ther—great-gran'f'ther I mean, Shearjashub Knapp—they used to have a big bed o' butterneggs in front o' the side door, an' it made the hull yard look sunshiny even when the day was dark an' drizzly. There ain't nothin' shinin'er an' goldier than them flowers with the different kinds o' yeller in 'em; they'll most freckle ye, they're so much like the sun shinin'. Then the next gen'ration come Gran'pa Knapp—his giv'n name was Ezry—an' he was bedrid for

more'n six year. An' he had butterneggs planted in boxes an' stood all 'round his bed, an' he did take sech cumf't in 'em. The hull room was yeller with 'em, an' they give him a sort o' biliousy, jandersy look; but he did set so by 'em; an' the very last growin' thing the good old man ever set eyes on here b'low, afore he see the green fields beyond the swellin' flood, was them bright an' shinin' butterneggs. An' his sister Hopey, she 't married Enoch Ambler o' Greens Farms, I never shall forgit her butterneggs border 't run all 'round her gard'n; the pea-green leaves an' yeller an' saffrony blooms looked for all the world like biled sparrergrass with chopped-egg sarce.

"Well, you'll wonder what on airth I'm at with all this rigmajig 'bout the Knappses an' their ways; but you'll see bimeby that it's all got suthin' to do with the story I begun on 'bout my sister, an' the way I come to lose her an' find her ag'in. There's jest one thing more I must put in, an' that's how the Knappses gen'lly died. 'Twas eenamost allers o' dum'-aigger. That's what they called it them days; I s'pose 'twould be malairy now; but that

wa'n't invented then, an' we had to git along 's well 's we could without sech lux'ries. The Knappses was long-lived—called threescore 'n ten bein' cut off in the midst o' your days—but when they did come ter die 'twas most gen'lly o' dum'aigger. But even 'bout that they had their own ways; an' when a Knapp—our branch I would say—got dum'aigger, why, 'twas dummer an' aiggerer 'n other folkses dum'aigger, an' so 't got the name o' the Knapp-shakes. An' they all seemed to use the same rem'dies an' physics for the c'm-plaint. They wa'n't much for doctors, but they all bleeved in yarbs an' hummade steeps an' teas. An' 'thout any 'dvice or doctor's receipts or anything, 's soon 's they felt the creepy, goose-fleshy, shiv'ry feelin' that meant dum'aigger, with their heads het up an' their feet 'most froze, they'd jest put some cam'mile an' hardhack to steep, an' sew a strip o' red flann'l round their neck, an' put a peppergrass poultice to the soles o' their feet, an' go to bed; an' there they'd lay, drinkin' their cam'-mile an' hardhack, strong an' hot, an' allers with their head on a hard, thin piller, till all

was over, an' they was in a land where there's no dum'aigger nor any kinder sickness 't all. Gran'f'ther died o' dum'aigger; great-gran'-f'ther died on it—had it six year; Aunt Hopey Ambler, great-aunt Cynthy, an' second cous'n Shadrach all went off that way. An' pa—well, he didn't die so; but that's part o' my sister's story.

"Ma, she was a Beebe, 's I said afore, but she might 'a ben 'most anything else, for there wa'n't any strong Beebe ways to her. Her mother was a Palmer—'most ev'rybody's mother is, down Stonin'ton way, ye know—an' ma was 's much Palmer 's Beebe, an' she was more Thayer than ary one on 'em (her gran'mother was a Thayer). So 't stands to reas'n that when we child'en come 'long we was more Knapp than Beebe. There was two on us, twins an' gals, me an' my sister; an' they named us arter pa's twin sisters 't died years afore, Coretty an' Loretty, an' I'm Loretty.

"Well, by the time we was four year old pa he'd riz to be cap'n. He was honest an' stiddy, 's all the Knappses be, an' that's the sort they want for whalin'. So when the *Tiger*

was to be fitted up for a three-year v'yge, why, there was nothin' for't but pa he must go cap'n. But ma she took on so 'bout it—for he hadn't ben off much sence she married him—that jest for peace, if nothin' else, he fin'lly consented to take her an' the twins along too; an' so we went. Well, I can't tell ye much about that v'yge, o' course. I was on'y a baby, an' all I know about it 's what ma told me long a'terward. But the v'yge 'ain't got much to do with my story. They done pretty fair, took a good many sperm-whales, got one big lump o' ambergrease, an' pa he was in great sperrits, when all on a suddent there come a dreffle storm, an' they lost their reck'nin', an' they got on some rocks, an' the poor old *Tiger* went all to pieces. I never can rightly remember how any soul on us was saved; but we was, some way or t'other, ma an' me an' some o' the crew, but poor pa an' Coretty was lost. As nigh 's I can rec'lect the story, we was tied to suthin' nuther that 'd float, ma an' me, an' a ship picked us up an' fetched us home. 'Tennerate we got here—to Stonin'ton I mean—but poor ma was a heart-

brok'n widder, an' I was half an orph'n an' only half a pair o' twins. For my good pa an' that dear little Coretty was both left far behind in the dreadful seas. An' that's why pa didn't die o' the Knapp-shakes.

"I won't take up your time tellin' all that come arter that, for it's another part you want to hear. So I'll skip over to the time when I was a woman growed, ma dead an' gone, an' me livin' all by myself, a single woman, goin' on thirty-seven year old, or p'r'aps suthin' older, in Har'ford, this State. I'd had my ups an' my downs, more downs than ups; I'd worked hard an' lived poor; but I was a Knapp, an' never gin up, an' so at last there I was in a little bit of a house, all my own, on Morg'n Street, Har'ford. An' there I lived, quite well-to-do, an' no disgrace to any Knapp 't ever lived, be she who she be. I had plenty to do, though I hadn't any reg'lar trade. I wa'n't a tail'ress exactly, but I could make over their pa's pant'loons for boys, an' cut out jackets by a pattern for 'em; an' I wa'n't a real mill'ner, but I could trim up a bunnet kind o' tasty, an' bleach over a Leghorn or a fancy braid as well as a perfes-

sion'l; I never larnt the dress-makin' trade, but I knew how to cut little gals' frocks an' make their black silk ap'ons; an' I'd rip up an' press an' clean ladies' dresses, an' do over their crape an' love veils, an' steam up their velvet ribb'ns over the teakettle to raise the pile. An' I sewed over carpets, an' stitched wristban's, an'—I don't know what I didn't do them days, for I had what ary Knapp I ever see—I mean our branch—had all their born days, an' that was, 's I s'pose you know, o' course—fac'lty.

"An' the best fam'lies in Har'ford employed me, an' set by me, an' knowin' what I was an' what my an'stors had ben, they treated me 's if I was one of their own sort. An' ag'in an' ag'in I've set to the same table with sech folks 's the Wadsworthses an' Ellsworthses an' Terrys an' Wellses an' Huntin'tons. An' I made a good deal outer my gard'nin'. I had all the Knapp hank'rin' for that, an' from the time I was a mite of a gal I was allers diggin' an' scratchin' in the dirt like a hen, stickin' in seeds an' slips, an' pullin' up weeds, snippin' an' prunin' an' trainin' an' wat'rin'. An' I had the beautif'lest gard'n in Har'ford, an' made a

pretty penny outer it too. I sold slips an' cuttin's, an' saved seeds o' my best posies, puttin' 'em up in little paper cases, pasted over at the edges, an' there was plenty o' cust'mers for 'em, I can tell ye. For my sunflowers was 's big as pie plates, my hollyhawks jest dazzlin' to look at, my cant'b'ry-bells big an' blue, my dailyers 's quilly 's quills—all colors: I had four kinds o' pinks; I had bach'lor's-butt'ns, feather-fews, noneserpretties, sweet-williams, chiny-asters, flowerdelooses, tulups, daffies, larkspurs, prince's-feathers, cock's-combs, red-balm, mournin'-bride, merrygools—Oh, I'm all outer breath, an' I 'ain't told ye half the blooms I had in that Har'ford gard'n. But I could tell ye! If 'twas all drawed out there on that floor an' painted to life, I couldn't see it any plainer'n I see 't this minnit, eyes shet or op'n. An' how I did set by them beds! Dr. Hawes—I went to the Centre to meetin'—Dr. Hawes he says, one time when he come to make a past'ral call, says he in his way—he was kinder ongraceful, ye know—pintin' his long finger at me an' shakin' it up an' down, he says: 'Loretty, Loretty,' very loud an' sollum, ye

know, 'don't you set your 'fections on them fadin' flowers o' earth, an' forgit the never-with'rin' flowers o' heav'n,' he says. Ye see he'd ben prayin' with me, an' right in the midst an' 'mongst o' his prayer he ketched sight o' me reachin' out to pull up a weed in the box o' young balsams I was startin' in the house. So 'tain't no wonder he was riled, for he was dreffle good, an' was one of them folks who, 's the hymn says,

> 'Knows the wuth o' prayer,
> An' wishes offen to be there.'

"'Well, 'twas 'bout that time, 's I was sayin', an' I was a single woman o' thirty-seven, or p'r'aps a leetle more, not wuth countin' on a single woman's age, when there come upon me the biggest, awf'lest, scariest s'prise 't ever come upon any one afore, let 'lone a Knapp—our branch. A letter come to me one day from Cap'n Akus Chadwick, form'ly o' Ston-in'ton, an' a friend o' pa's, but now an old man in New Lon'on, an' this 's what he says: Seems 't a ship 'd come into New Bedford, a whalin' ship, with a r'mark'ble story. They'd had rough weather an' big gales, an' got outer

their course, an' they'd sighted land, an' when they come to't—I don' know how or why they did come to't, whether they meant ter or had ter—they see on the shore a woman, an' when they landed there wa'n't ary other folks on the hull island; nothin' but four-footed critters—wild ones—an' birds an' monkeys, an' all kinder outlandish bein's; not a blessed man or woman, not even a heath'n or a idle, 's fur 's they could tell, in the hull deestrick, but on'y jest this one poor woman. An' she couldn't talk no more'n Juley Brace to the 'sylum; an' she was queer-lookin', an' her clo'es was all outer fash'n, kinder furry an' skinny garm'nts, an' she had a lonesome, scaret kinder look, 's if she hadn't ben much in cump'ny. An' yit with 't all there was a sorter r'spectable 'pearance, an'— Oh, ladies, I'm all stuffed up, an' can't swaller good. I'm livin' over 'n my mind the fust time I read them words, an' was struck all 'n a heap by 'em. Jest hand me them posies a minnit, an' I'll be all right in a jiffy. There, now I can go on. With it all, he says, there was a strong Knapp look about this unfort'nate isl'nder; in fac', she favored 'em so

strong 't the fust mate, a Mystic man, who'd offen heerd the story o' pa's shipwreck an' Coretty's drownin', thought he'd orter 'nquire inter the matter. The cap'n o' the ship was a Scotchman, an' the sailors was mostly Portergeese, an' Sandwidgers, an' Kannakers, an' she wouldn't take no notice o' ary on 'em, an' tried to run away. But when 'Lias Mall'ry, the mate, went up to her she stopped an' looked 't him, an' kinder gabbled a leetle bit, in a jibbery sorter way, an' when he ast her to come aboard, she follered like a lamb. An' they fetched her along, an' the more they see on her—I mean 'Lias, who was the only one 't knowed the Knappses, our branch—the more 't seemed sure an' sartin 't this was reely an' truly, strange as 't might be, Coretty Knapp, who'd ben lost more'n thirty year afore. There's no use my tryin' to tell you how I felt, or what I done jest at fust; when I read that letter I couldn't seem to sense it one mite, an' yit in half an hour 't seemt 's if I'd a-knowed it a year, an' I never misdoubted that 'twas true 's gospil, an' that my poor dear little twin sister Coretty 'd ben found an' was comin' home to me.

"I gin up pa t'wunst; he'd 'a ben too old now, even for a Knapp, an' I see plain enough 't he must be deader'n dead; but oh, what 'twas to realize 't I had a reel flesh an' blood sister, queer an' oncivilized 's she must be a'ter livin' in the backwoods so long! The letter went on to say that 'Lias Mall'ry was on his way to Har'ford this very minnit, 'bringin' Miss Knapp to her only livin' r'lation'—that was me. An' 't said they was goin' to bring her jest 's she was when they ketched her, so's I could see her in her nat'ral state: an' who had a better right? 'But land's sake!' I says to myself 's I lay that letter down, 'how she'll look a-comin' through Har'ford streets all skinny an' furry an' jabbery 's they d'scribe her! I do hope she'll take a carr'ge.' Well, I couldn't stand all this alone, an' I put on my bunnit an' shawl an' went up to Dr. Hawes's an' to Deac'n Colt'ns's an' over to Sister Pitkins's, an' I told 'em all this amazin' hist'ry, wonderf'ler than Rob'nson Crusoe or Riley's Narr'tive. An' sech a stir 's it made in quiet old Har'ford you'd never bleeve. Afore I'd fairly got hum an' took off my things, folks begun to call. Ev'ry one wanted to know 'f

'twas reely an' truly so, an' 'f I had a reel live heath'n sister comin' home from them far-away countries where ev'ry prospeck pleases an' only man is vile. But this part on't I wouldn't hear to for a minnit. 'Whatever she is,' I says, 'she ain't a heath'n. She's a Knapp, born 'f not bred, an' there never was a heath'n 'mong the Knappses sence Knappses was fust made. Mebbe she ain't a perfesser,' I says, 'prob'ly ain't, for she 'ain't had no settled min'ster or sech priv'leges, but she don't have nothin' to do with idles an' sech fool'shness,' I says. But I could see 't they was countin' on suthin' outer this for monthly concert, an' that stirred me up a leetle; but I jest waited. An' bimeby—what do you think o' this?—there was a *c'mitty* waited on me. An' sech a time!

"There was P'fessor Phelps o' the Congr'ational Sem'nary, an' P'fessor Spencer o' Wash'n't'n Collige, an' Elder Day, the Baptist min'ster; an' there was one o' the Dem'cratic ed'tors o' the Har'ford Times an' some one from the Connet'cut Cur'nt, an' Dr. Barnes, o' Weth'sfield, a infiddle, who'd writ a sorter Tom Painey book that was put

inter the stove by ev'ry Christian 't got hold on it. An' there was Mr. Gallagher from the deaf an' dumb 'sylum, an' Dr. Cook from the crazy 'sylum, an' Mr. Williams, the 'Piscople min'ster, an' Priest O'Conner, the Cath'lic, an' Pars'n Loomis, the Meth'dist. That's 'bout all, I bleeve, but there may 'a ben some I disremember arter all these years. An' what do you think—what *do* you think they wanted? 'Twas some time afore I could see through their talk myself, for they was all big scholars, an' you know them's the hardest sort to compr'end. But bimeby I made out 't they was all dreffle 'xcited about this story o' my sister, for it gin 'em a chance they'd never 'xpected to git, of a bran'-new human bein' growed up without 'precept or 'xample,' 's they say, or ary idee o' religion or pol'tics or church gov'nment, or doctrines of any sort. An' they'd all got together an' 'greed, 'f I was willin', they'd jest 'xper'ment on Coretty Knapp. Well, 't fust I didn't take t' the idee one speck. It seemed kinder onnat'ral an' onhuman to go to work pullin' to pieces an' patchin' up an' fittin' in scraps to this poor, onfort'nate, empty sorter

soul 't had strayed 'way off from its hum in a Christian land o' deestrick schools an' meetin's, an' all sech priv'leges, instead o' takin' her right inter our hearts an' 'fections, an' larnin' her all 't she orter know. 'T seemed 's if we orter let 'xper'ments alone, an' go to coddlin' an' coss'tin' up this poor lost sheep, which was wuth far more'n ninety an' nine which goes not astray.

"But howsomepro—as Elder Cheeseman used to say—they was all, 's I said afore, larned men, an' most on 'em good men too, an' 's they was all 'greed, an' I was only one, and a woman too, I gin up. An' afore they left 'twas all settled 't they should all have a try at poor sister Coretty, an' all persent their own views on religion, pol'tics, an' so forth. An' me nor nobody was to make nor meddle aforehand, or try to prej'dice her one way or t'other; an' so they 'xpected to find out what the nat'ral mind would take ter, or whether there was anything 't all in heredit'ry ways. I could 'a telled 'em that last afore they b'gun, but I thought I'd let 'em find 't out their own way.

"You might think, mebbe, I'd ben scaret

'bout the r'sult. For what a dreffle thing 'f poor Coretty 'd ben talked over by Elder Day —a dreffle glib talker, 's all Baptists be, an' a reel good man, 's most on 'em is, though I say 't 's shouldn't, bein' a Knapp myself, with all the Knappses' d'slike to their doctrines—what 'f she'd ben talked over to 'mersion an' close c'mmunion views, an' ben dipped 'stead o' sprinkled? Or agin, 'f she'd bleeved all the Cath'lic priest let on, an' swallered his can'les an' beads an' fish an' sech popish things. Or wuss still, s'pose she'd backslid hully, an' put her trust in Dr. Barnes's talk, b'comin' an infiddle, like unter the fool that said in his heart. But some way or t'other I wa'n't a mite 'fraid. I fell right back on my faith in a overrulin' Prov'dence, an' p'r'aps more on Knapp ways, an' felt all the time Coretty 'd come out right at the eend.

"But you see she hadn't come yit, an' the thing was ter know whether you could make her un'erstan' anything till she'd larnt to talk. 'F she could only gabble, how was any on us to know whether she gabbled Baptistry or 'Piscopality or whatall, an' we'd got to wait

an' see. An' Mr. Gallagher, o' the 'sylum, he wanted to try her on signs fust, an' see 'f he couldn't c'munnicate with her right off by snappin' his fingers an' screwin' up his featur's an' p'intin' at her in that dumb way they do up t' the 'sylum. He said 'twas more nat'ral to do that way than to talk; but then he didn't know much about the Knappses an' their powers o' speech. An' Dr. Cook, the crazy doctor, he said he was int'rested in the brains part o' the subjick, an' he'd jest liketer get at 'em; he wanted to see what 'fect on her head an' 'djacent parts this queer sorter retired life 'd had. An' so they went on till they went off.

"Well, might 's well come to the p'int o' my story, an' the blessed minnit I fust see my twin sister, my t'other half, you might say, for 'twas reely her, a-comin' in at the gate. 'Twa'n't so bad 's I 'xpected. I'd kinder got my head sot on picters o' the Eskimoses in my jography, with buff'lo robes tied round 'em, an' I was r'lieved when I see her get outer the carr'ge with 'Lias Mall'ry lookin' quite respect'ble an' Knappy. To be sure she

had skins on, but she'd gone an' made 'em inter a reel fair likeness o' my plainest ev'ry-day dresses, cut gorin' an' sorter fittin' in at the waist, an' with the skirt pretty long, 'bout to the tops o' her gaiters. An' she had quite a nice-lookin' bunnit on, braided o' some kinder furrin grass or straw, hum-made o' course, an' not jest in the latest fash'n, but that wa'n't to be 'xpected, when she'd made it 'fore ever seein' one. An' she was dreffle tanned an' freckled an' weather-beat like, but, oh, my! my! wa'n't she a Knapp all over, from head to foot! Ev'ry featur' favored some o' the fam'ly. There was Uncle Zadock's long nose, an' gran'mer's square chin, an' Aunt Hopey's thick eyebrows, an' dear pa's pacin' walk, an' over an' above all there was *me* all over her, 's if I was a-lookin' 't myself in a lookin'-glass. I dun know what I done for a minnit. I cried an' I choked an' I blowed my nose, an' I couldn't say one blessed word till I swallered hard an' set my teeth, an' then I bust out, 'Oh, Coretty Knapp, I'm glad to see ye! how's your health?' I'd forgot for a minnit 'bout her not talkin', but I own I was beat when

she jest says, 's good 's I could say it myself, says she, 'Thank ye, sister Loretty; how's yourn?' An' we shook hands an' kissed each other. I'd been so 'fraid she'd rub noses or hit her forrid on the ground—s'lammin', 's the books o' travels says—an' then she took one cheer an' I took another, an' we both took a good look 't each other, for you know we hadn't met anywheres for the longest spell. An' I forgot all about 'Lias Mall'ry till he says, 'You see, Miss Knapp, she speaks pretty good, don't she? Them Scotch an' Portergeese an' so on couldn't get a word out on her, but 's soon 's she heerd good Connect'cut spoke, she picked 't right up 's slick 's anything.' 'O' course I did, Mr. Mall'ry,' says Coretty. 'I never could abide them furriners. United States talk 's good enough for me,' says she. 'Knapp all over,' says I; 'an' now do take off your things an' jest make yourself to hum, an' le's have a good old-fashioned talk, for I 'ain't seen none o' my folks for so long.'

"But when she took off her bunnit an' I see how the poor thing 'd ben an' gone an' twisted up her hair behind in the same tight,

knobby, Knappy way all the Knappses—the female part o' our branch, I mean—had fixed theirn for gen'rations farzino, I 'most cried ag'in. 'Course she hadn't no hair-pins nor shoestring to fast'n 't with, but she'd tied it tight 's tight with some kind o' barky stuff, an' stuck a big thorn in to keep it there.

"Well, you won't care 'bout our talk; it was all folksy an' Knappy an' 'bout fam'ly matters, for we had lots to talk about. She'd lost all run o' the fam'ly an' neighbors, never hearin' a word for more'n thirty year. In fac', she'd forgot all about pa an' ma an' me, 's was nat'ral, with not a livin' soul to talk to, for she owned right up she'd never seed a human bein', or heerd a word o' speech, or seen a paper, sence I see her last in that dreffle spell o' weather out to sea. So I'll jest jump over to where the 'xperiment was tried an' how it come out. I'd kep' my prommus an' never said one word about religion, or pol'tics, or church gover'ment, or anything o' that kind, though I did ache to know her views.

"An' they all come in, the ev'nin' arter she arriv, the c'mitty, I mean, to have it out with

her. Coretty didn't s'rmise 'twas an 'xperiment—she thought 'twas a sorter visitin' time, an' she was dreffle fond o' comp'ny, an' never 'd had much chance for 't. So there she set, a-knittin' (she took to that right off, an' 'fore I'd done castin' on for her she ketched it outer my hands an' says, ''Twill be stronger with double thread, Loretty,' an' she ravelled it out an' done it over double). She set there knittin', 's I said afore, an' I set close by her, an' the c'mitty they set round, an' they'd 'greed 'mong theirselves how they'd do it, an' who'd have the fust chance, an' arter a few p'lite remarks about the weather an' her health, an' sech, Mr. Williams, the 'Piscople min'ster, begun. An' he says: 'Miss Knapp, I s'pose there wa'n't no Church in your place o' res'dence, seein' 't there was so few 'nhabitants. But even 'f there'd a-ben more 'f a parish,' says he, 'there couldn't 'a ben no reel Church' (he spoke it with a cap'tle C, 's all 'Piscoples does), ''s there wa'n't no prop'ly fixed-up priest, nor no bishop to put his hands on one,' he says. (Mebbe I don't give jest the very words, but I git the meanin' straight.) 'No,

sir,' says sister, 'there wa'n't a meetin'-house on the hull island, nor any means o' grace o' that kind; for there wa'n't no folks but me, an' you can't have a prosp'rous religious s'ciety without folks. But 'f there had ben,' she says, ribbin' away at her stockin' top, two an' one, two an' one, says she, 'we'd 'a lis'ned to a few can'dates, an' s'lected a suit'ble party, had a s'ciety meetin', an' called him. For myself,' says she, 'I don't set much by this applestollic success'n.'

"Well, I was beat ag'in, spite o' knowin' the strong feelin' o' the fam'ly on that very p'int; for how on airth 'd she picked up sech sound an' good idees 'way off in that rurul deestrick? I tell ye, ye can't 'xplain it on ary other ground than *ways;* 'twas Knapp ways. Mr. Williams he looked a mite riled, but he was a dreffle pleasant man, an' he kep' on, though the others they sorter smiled. I can't rec'lect all he said, but 'twas 'bout the orders in the Church, the deac'ns an' presbyter'ans an' bishops, an' he talked 'bout the creed an' other art'cles, an' collicks an' lit'nies, an' all them litigical things. He did talk beautiful, I

own it myself, an' my mouth was all in my heart for a spell, for Coretty kep' so still, an' seemed 's if she was a-listenin' an' med'tatin'. But in a minnit I see she was jest countin' her stitches to set her seam, an' I was r'lieved. An' when he got through talkin' he handed her a prayer-book, jest a common one, he called it, an' a little cat'chism. Coretty took 'em, perlite 's ye please, an' she looked 't the covers, an' she says, very p'lite, 'Much obleeged to ye, sir, but they don't seemter int'rest me someway. I can make up prayers for myself, 'f it's all the same to you,' she says, still dreffle p'lite; 'an' this cat'chism don't seem to go t' the right spot, 's fur as I'm consarned,' says she, not op'nin' it 't all, 'but I'm jest 's much obleeged to ye;' an' she went on knittin'.

"Then Elder Day he op'ned the subjeck o' Baptistry. Fust sister Coretty lis'ned p'litely 's she had afore, but he hadn't hardly got to his sec'ndly afore she pricked up her ears an' jumped 's if suthin' 'd hit her, an' she lay down her stockin' an' stiffened up, an' she looked him right in the eye; an' 'fore he was half-way to the thirdly she broke out, an' she says: 'Elder

Day, I don't want to be imp'lite to comp'ny in my sister's house, an' me jest arriv, but there's suthin' in me that reely can't stand them doctrines o' yourn another minnit, they rile me so. No, I *won't* stand it!' she says, with her face all red, an' her eyes snappin', an' she b'gun to gether up her things, and git up outer her cheer for a run. But I went up ter her, an' whispered to her, an' sorter smoothed her down, for I see what 'twas, an' t the old Knapp feelin' 'gainst Baptists that 'd ben growin' up an' 'ncreasin' for cent'ries was all comin' inside on her t' wunst an' tearin' her up; but Elder Day he jest said, 's pleasant 's pie-crust, he says, 'Let her 'lone, Miss Knapp, an' I'll read her a soothin' varse or two,' and he up with a little leather-covered book, an' he read out:

'A few drops o' water dropped from a man's han',
They call it baptissum an' think it will stan'
On the head of a child that is under the cuss,
But that has no warrant in Scripter for us.'

"He was goin' on, but Coretty she jest jumped up, makin' her cheer fall over with a bang, an' she slat her work down an' run outer the room, her knittin' bobbin' a'ter her, for the

ball o' yarn was in her pocket. I went a'ter her to coax her back, but she kep' a-sayin', 'Oh, Loretty, what's the matter o' me! I'm jest bilin' an' bubblin' an' swellin' up inside, an' I feel 's if nothin' could help me but burnin' up a few Baptists,' she says. An' I says, 'Keep 's quiet 's you can, sister; it's dreffle tryin', I know, an' it's all come on you t' wunst—the strong Knapp feelin' agin 'em—but come back to the keepin'-room an' we'll change the subjeck.' An' she come. An' then Priest O'Conner, the Cath'lic, he begun at her, an' he was jest 's smooth 's silk, an' he talked reel fluent 'bout the saints, an' purg't'ry, an' Fridays, an' the bach'lor state for min'sters, an' penances, an' I d' know whatall. An' Coretty she was hard at work at her knittin', an' when he stopped to take breath, an' pull out some beads an' medals an' jingly trink'ts o' that sort, she kinder started 's if she'd jest waked up, an' she says, ''Xcuse me, Mr. O'Conner, I lost the thread o' what you was sayin' for a minnit, but I won't trubble ye to go over 't agin; I don't seemter take to Cath'lics, an' I never wear beads.' An' she went on knittin'.

"An' so 'twas with 'em all—'Piscople, Baptist, Meth'dist—ev'ry livin' soul on 'em, they done their best, an' never p'duced any impression 't all. But bimeby P'fessor Phelps, o' the Congr'ation'l Sem'nary, he got his turn, an' b'gun. Oh, how she did jest drink it in! She dropped her knittin' an' set up an' leaned forrud, an' she smiled, an' nodded her head, an' beat her hands up an' down, an' tapped her foot, 's if she was hearin' the takin'est music; she 'most purred, she seemed so comfort'ble an' sat'sfied. Oncet in a while she'd up an' say suthin' herself 'fore he could say it. Frinstance, when he come to foreord'nation an' says, 'My good woman, I hope soon ter 'xplain to you 'bout the won'ful decrees o' God, an' how they are His etarnel purpose, an'"—'Don't put yerself out to do that, p'fessor,' she says. 'O' course I know 't accordin' to the couns'l of His own will He 'th foreordained whats'ever cometh to pass; but I'd jest like to hear you preach on that subjeck.' An' when he alluded to some havin' ben 'lected to everlastin' life, she says, kinder low, to herself like, 'Out of His mere good pleasure from all etar-

nity, I s'pose.' The very words o' the cat'chism, ye see, an' she never goin' to weekly cat'chism or monthly r'view! An' when he stopped a minnit she says, all 'xcited like, 'Now I call *that* talk, an' it's the very fust I've heerd to-night.' Then he took a book out of his pocket. 'Twas a copy of the old New England primer, with whity-blue covers outside an' the cat'chism inside, an' he says, 'Miss Knapp, p'raps you ain't f'miliar with this little book, but—' She ketched it right outer his hand, an' the tears they come right up inter her eyes, an' she says, in a shaky voice, 'I don't think I ever see 't afore, p'fessor, but it 'pears to be the Westminster Shorter.' Then she jest give way an' cried all over it till 'twas soppin'. An' she did jest hang on ter his words when he come to the prob'ble futur' o' most folks, an' how the cat'chism says they're 'under His wrath an' cuss, an' so made li'ble to all the mis'ries o' this life, to death itself, an' the pains o' hell f'rever.' She jest kep' time to them words with her head an' her hands an' her feet, 's if 'twas an old toon she'd knowed all her born days.

"An' so 'twas, right straight through; they tried her on ev'rything, an' 'twas allus the same come-out; she picked an' kep' all the Knappses had allus stood to, an' throwed away what the Knappses 'd d'sliked. She 'most pitched her knittin', ball an' all, at the Dem'cratic newspaper man; an' when the Connet'cut Cur'nt ed'tor laid down the Whig platform, she called out loud: 'I'm on that; that's my pol'cy. Who's our cand'date?' Poor Mr. Gallagher, he didn't make out to c'mmunicate with her 's he 'xpected. He tried her on a Bible story in signs, but a'ter lookin' at him a minnit she turned 'way an' says: 'Poor creeter, can't he talk any? He must 'a ben cast away some time, I guess, an' tis sorter dum'ing to the speech, as I orter know. But he'll pick 't up agin.' An' the doctor from the crazies, an' the p'fessor from Wash'n't'n Collige, they tried all kinds o' brainy tricks on her, but her head was 's sound as their own, and made on the good old Knapp patt'n. An'—oh, I wish you could 'a seen how foolish Dr. Barnes looked when she says to him, a'ter he'd op'ned out his infiddle b'liefs or unb'liefs, says she: 'Now,

you jest hush up. I sh'd think you'd be ashamed, a'ter livin' here in a Christian land 'mong Congr'ation'lists all your days, an' not know who made you, an' what your chief eend is, an' what the Scripters princ'p'ly teach. Even I knowed that,' she says, 'an' me in a heath'n land o' grav'n im'ges.'

"I'm spinnin' out my story in reel Knappy way—they're a long winded lot—but I'll try to bind off now. But fust I must tell ye 'bout the time I showed Coretty my gard'n. She'd ben anxious to see 't, said she lotted on flowers, an' had dreffle pretty ones on th' island, kinder tropicky an' queer, but she wanted ter see some hum ones. So I took her out an' showed her my beds. 'Twas July, an' my gard'n was like a rainbow, or a patch-work comf'ter —all colors. She walked round an' looked at the roses an' pinks an' all, and smelt at 'em, an' seemed pleased.

"'But somehow I'm kinder dis'p'inted too,' she says; 'I d' know why, but there's suthin' lackin'.' I jest kep' still, an' kinder led her 'long down the walk to the corner 'hind the row o' box, an' fust she knowed she was stand-

in' by the bed o' butterneggs. She stood stock-still a minnit, then she held up both hands an' cried out, 'Oh, C'rinthians!'

"'Twas the fust time she'd ever used the 'xpression; there never 'd ben any 'casion for 't, for she'd had sech a quiet sorter life. A'ter that she was allus hangin' round that bed, like a cat round a valerium patch, 'tendin' them posies, weedin' 'em, wat'rin', tyin' 'em up, pickin' 'em, wearin' 'em, an' keepin' 'em in her room. 'Twas a dreffle comfort to have her with me; but 'twa'n't to last; I see that 'most 's soon 's she got settled down with me. She b'gun to droop an' wilt down, an' to look pindlin' an' lean like, an' bleached out. I tried not to see it, an' talked 's if 'twas change o' air, an' givin' up her r'tired life, an' 's if she'd soon pick up, an' grow to a good old Knapp age. But when she b'gun to c'mplain o' feelin' creepy an' goose-fleshy an' shiv'ry, to say her head was het up' an her feet 'most froze, I couldn't shet my eyes to 't no longer; I knowed the sympt'ms too well; it was the old Knapp enemy, dum'-aigger. She was awful young for that, not forty yit, an' the Knappses mostly

lived to eighty or ninety. But I'll tell you how I reas'ned 't out to myself. The fam'ly — the rest on 'em — was all their lives takin' in gradjal like, stronger an' stronger, 's they could bear 'em, the Knapp b'liefs. One a'ter t'other they got 'em, like teeth, an' so they could stand it. But jest think on 't a minnit, that poor dear gal took in all them b'liefs—an' strong ones they was, too, the strongest goin' — in jest a few days' time. Foreord'nation, 'lection, etarn'l pun'shment, the Whig platform, Congr'ation'l s'ciety gov'nment, United States langwidge, white-oak cheese, butterneggs—in short, the hull set o' Knapp ways, she took 'em all, 's you might say, 't one big swaller. No wonder they disagreed with her, an' left her nothin' for 't but to take the only one left 't she hadn't took a'ready — the Knapp shakes!

"I didn't say nothin' 'bout it to her; I never spoke o' the fam'ly trubble 't all, an' I knowed she'd never heerd on 't in her life. She kep' up an' 'bout for a spell, but one day she come to see me, an' she says, very quiet an' carm, 'Loretty, 'f ye'll give me the sarce-

pan I'll jest set some cam'mile an' hardhack to steep, an' put a strip o' red flannel round my neck an' go to bed.' My heart sunk 'way down 's I heerd her; but I see 't she'd left out some o' the receipt, so I hoped 'twa'n't so bad 's I feared. But jest 's she was goin' inter her bedroom she turned round an' says, 'An mebbe a peppergrass poult'ce on the bottoms o' my feet would be a good an' drawin' thing,' she says. There was a lump in my throat, but I thinks to myself, 'Never mind, 'f she don't 'lude to the piller.' An' I was pickin' the peppergrass an' wond'rin' if 'twas the smell o' that 't made my eyes so wet an' smarty, when she calls me softly, an' she says, 'Sister, I'm dreffle sorry to trubble ye, but 'f you could give me another piller, a hard, thin one, I'd be 'bleeged.' Then I knowed 'twas all over, an' I never had a grain o' hope ag'in.

"You'll 'xcuse me, ladies, from talkin' much more 'bout that time. I think on't 'nough, dear knows; I dream on't, an' wake with my piller all wet, but 'tain't good for me to say too much 'bout it. She wa'n't sick long; her

dum'-aigger wa'n't very chronic, 's the doctors says, but sharp an' quick. An' jest three weeks from the day she come home to me she'd added one more to the long list o' things she'd had to larn in sech a lim'ted per'od, poor gal, an' took in the Knapp way o' dyin'.

"An' 'twas a quiet way, peace'ble, still like, not makin' no great fuss 'bout it, but ready an' willin'. She didn't want much waitin' on, only fresh posies—butterneggs o' course—in the wineglass on the stand by her bed; an' ye may be sure she allus had 'em there. An' I picked all I had, an' stuck 'em in pitchers an' mugs an' bowls, an' stood 'em on the mantelshelf, an' on the chest o' drawers, an' any place 't would hold 'em, an' the room was all lit up with 'em—an' with her hope an' faith an' patient ways too—an' so she seemed to pass right through a shinin' yeller path till we lost sight on her, where it ended, I ain't the leastest doubt, in the gold'n streets o' heav'n.

"But I 'xpect to see her ag'in 'fore very long. There's more o' the fam'ly t'other side than there is here now, an' when I think o' all the tribe o' Knappses in that land 'cross the

river, why, I think I'd be kinder glad to go there myself; 'twould be 'most like goin' to Thanksgivin' 't the old homestid. An' I was sayin' to Marthy Hustid yist'day—she looks a'ter me now, ye know—'t I had a kinder creepy, goose-fleshy, shiv'ry feelin' sometimes, 't my head was all het up, an' my feet 'most froze, an' I guessed she better be lookin' at the yarb bags up garr't, an' layin' in a little red flann'l, in case o' any sickness in the fam'ly. An', 'Marthy,' I says, 'I s'pose there's a harder piller in the house 'n the one I'm usin'—a thin one, you know.' An' I *am* glad the butter-neggs is comin' in seas'n."

As we came away from the little brown house and drove along towards Greenwich we were silent for a little. Then I exclaimed: "Jane Benedict, how much truth is there in that wild tale? Was her sister shipwrecked, and did she appear after many days? For pity's sake enlighten me, for my head is 'all het up,' as Aunt Loretty would say!"

"She was an only child," answered Jane, calmly, as she touched Billy lightly with the whip. "I believe her father was a sailor, and

was lost at sea. She herself lived as housekeeper for many years with Dr. Lounsbury, of Stamford, who wrote that queer book on heredity—Heirship, I think he called it. Perhaps she imbibed some of his ideas."

VI.

DEACON PHEBY'S SELFISH NATUR.

"*Sooth I would be a woman for your sake,*
A foolish girl, an it would give you ease."

Old Play.

DEACON PHEBY'S SELFISH NATUR.

We call it the Indian burying-ground. It is a piece of old pine forest along the bank of Gale River, near the spot where that wild and beautiful mountain stream joins its sister waters of Pond Brook.

It seems full of graves, for there are mounds of all sizes and forms, where, I suppose, lie buried ancient trees. But there was never burial-place like this, so filled with color and light and life. In June all the lovely wild flowers of that Northern spring seem to gather there; and each mound is a heap of soft greenness, with bits of bright color here and there. The creamy blossoms of the bunchberry lie close together among their leaves, making a rich mat of white and green; the soft, light plumes of tiarella are waving there, white, flecked sometimes with salmon-pink; the cinque-foil creeps in and out among the other plants, and shows its yellow stars; the

little smilacina lifts its spike of tiny, fragrant blossoms; and the delicate, pink-veined flowers of the oxalis nestle shyly among their trefoil leaves. There, too, the clintonia opens its pale yellow blossoms, and straw-lilies swing their slender bells; the twisted-stalk hangs its rosy cups; the pure white starflower stands lightly on its slender stem, in its circle of leaves; and Indian-hemp shakes its pink coral drops. There are red and white clover, Solomon's-seal, the small yellow sorrel, golden-ragwort, buttercups, gold-thread, and violets. All these, and more too, I have seen and gathered among those graves in a Franconia June. Then there are feathery, graceful ferns; soft, rich mosses of varied tints, from deepest, darkest hue, through olive and golden brown, to palest sea-green; and there are lichens of quiet gray and soft drab touched with scarlet and gold; grasses and sedges wave and sway in the breeze; and the little wood-rushes raise their pretty brown flowers from among their downy leaves. Had ever graves a richer covering?

And there is music there. The wind among

the tall pines is like an organ sometimes, and the river and brook murmur and babble and rush and tinkle. One can hear the whir and hum and chirp and buzz of insect life; and there is always the singing of the birds.

And there are homes for the living amid these very mounds. The shy hermit-thrush builds her nest there in the grass, and lays her eggs of turquoise blue; the Maryland yellow-throat makes her little home at foot of tussock of sedge or tuft of tall fern, weaving together the blades or leaves over the top to roof her bower; the song and vesper sparrows hide their tiny dwellings in the grass along the river-side, and the vireos swing their hammocks overhead.

All this is in June, the fair month in which I always seek these Northern hills. But I know that this burying-spot is lovely in all seasons. The summer opens the buds of the wild yellow-lilies along the river-bank; the meadow-rue is then a mass of pure, soft, white bloom; and golden-daisies, with dark centre and shining rays, make brilliant spots of color there. Then autumn spreads her gorgeous robe over

those mounds, and they are gay with red and yellow, russet, wine, brown, and orange. And last of all comes the pure snow, and lays a soft, fleecy covering over all.

There are no stately marble monuments here, or cold white tablets; but at the head and foot of many a mound lies a granite block or bowlder, softened and made beautiful by moss and vine and tiny flower. Or a pine, fir, or hemlock rears itself—a tall, straight column—near some quiet grave. No labored epitaphs, no words which tell of hope, of resurrection, of immortality, are written there; nor are they needed. The bursting chrysalis, setting free the bright-winged butterfly; the little egg, so still and waxen white, but holding within color and motion and song, which shall take wings and soar upward some bright June day; the creeping, sluggish caterpillar patiently spinning its shroud, or digging its own grave in some quiet spot, there to lie through that long northern winter a frozen, dead thing, but ready with the warmth of early summer to wake and rise and fly in the soft sunny air, a gay, fluttering moth with

feathered wings; the buried seed; the waking flower; the bursting bud—all these are living lessons, and require no letters cut into cold stone to make their meaning clearer.

No massive wall or stiff iron fence shuts in this God's-acre of ours. On one side a bank slopes down into a grassy meadow through which Gale River comes rushing and dashing over its rocky bed; another side is bordered by Pond Brook, a crystal-clear mountain streamlet; along the third is a wild hedge-row of trees, shrubs, and tall herbs — wild-cherry, with tassels of bitter-sweet scent; hazel, with odd green tufts which mean to be nuts some day; shad-blow, with leaves of bluish green, white flowers, or green berries waiting for the sun to make them red; quivering poplar with slender white trunks; mountain maple, birch, and alder; and on the fourth side runs a quiet country road, along which pass hay-wagons with their fragrant freight, the farmer's cart, the roomy chaise; where merry children go to and from the village school; but where is no sound of hurrying crowds, of traffic, of busy, bustling city life.

It was in this peaceful spot, on a fair June morning, that I first saw the hero of my sketch. He was very unlike a hero as I saw him then. A strange, nondescript figure, I did not at first know if it were man or woman; for he wore over his rough brown coat a small plaid shawl of faded red and black, folded cornerwise with the point behind, and two ends crossing over the breast; a long blue-and-white checked apron was tied about the waist, and hung nearly to his ankles, almost hiding the shabby, patched trousers; his yellow hair was long, and fell over his shoulders straight and lank, and upon it he wore a broad-brimmed hat of coarse straw, tied down over the ears by a dingy blue ribbon.

On a mossy stone between two mounds, one long and narrow, the other looking like a child's grave, sat this quaint creature. It was knitting, and did not look up as I passed, butterfly net in hand, and I tried not to stare too curiously at the singular being. But as soon as I went in-doors I asked eager questions as to its identity.

"Oh, that's only Deacon Pheby," said Eunice Ann. "I thought you'd seen him afore. His folks used to live round here, they say; the Knightses they was. His mother was the Widder Knight, and there was two young ones, a boy 'n' a girl. They moved 'way from here 'fore I come, an' I never heerd on 'em till about a year ago, when this queer-lookin' feller come along, an' said he was the Widder Knight's boy growed up. An' folks says he really is; but seems 's if suthin' 's come over him. For they say he used to be a likely, smart boy, full o' sperrits, cuttin' up an' kitin' round, fishin' an' gunnin' an' trappin' an' sech. But he come back this way, dressed up in women's duds, an' callin' himself Pheby; says his ma's dead an' gone, an' the girl, too; but he don't tell much about himself, where he's been, or what he's been doin'. He's a good, pious sort, too; carries a Test'ment round in his apern pocket, an' 'most allers has a hymn-book too, an' reads 'em a lot. He's allers pleasant-spoken, an' dreffle nice to dumb creeters an' young ones, an' partikerly to old folks, an' so they've got to callin'

him Deacon, an' every one in Francony has a good word for Deacon Pheby, crazy 's he be."

This was all she, Uncle Eben, or any one else could tell me of the strange man. And it was only from himself, after frequent meetings in the Indian burying-ground, where he was a daily visitor, that I learned at last his pathetic story. I had watched him for days before I spoke to him. He seemed so unconscious of my presence—even when I lingered near, looking for wild flowers, butterflies, and moths —so absorbed in his own occupations, that I shrank from intruding. He always brought his knitting—a stocking of coarse blue yarn—but it did not grow very fast. For his time and attention were all devoted to the tending of the two mounds between which he always sat. He kept them so neat and bright, removing each dry, dead leaf, picking up the tassels of birch or willow fallen there, taking away the leafless bramble straying across the sod, lifting and supporting any little plant beaten down by rain or wind. In a dry season he often brought water in an old tin pail to

refresh the drooping flowers, and so his graves were always fresh and green.

Our acquaintance began one day, as I ventured to swing my net around his very head in pursuit of a white admiral butterfly, the first of the season, by his remarking, pleasantly, "This 's a real nice butterflyey, gravesy kind of a place, ain't it, ma'am?"

This broke the ice, and we were soon friends. But it was not on that first day, nor for many days afterwards, that I gathered all his story.

"I don't rec'lect father; he was Pel'tiah Knight, from Bungay way. He died when we young ones was babies. Mother never said no great about him, an' I guess he wa'n't much to speak on, An' the fust thing I rec'lect was livin' with mother in the little house out by Sincler's Mill. How we come to be there, whether father'd worked there afore he died or what all, I can't say, for I don't know. 'Tennerate, there we was, jest mother an' Pheby an' me."

He stopped abruptly, gave one of his quick, odd glances up into the tree-tops, patted softly with one hand the longest mound, and

then went on: "Yes, ye might 's well know fust 's last, I ain't reely Pheby; I'm t'other one. We was twins—boy an' gal. I was Phebus, an' she was Pheby. There was lots o' twins in Francony 'bout that time, an' some in Lisbon, an' down Lincoln way. An' 'twas kinder the fash'n to name 'em names that sounded 's if they b'longed together—names that hitched well, ye know. There was Leon'das Peabody's babies—they died young—they was both gals, an' they was named Dusty an' Gusty, short for Dusdemony an' Augusty, ye see. An' Mis' Deac'n Quimby, out Sugar Hill way, her pair o' boys was Val'ntine an' Orson, out of a story-book; an' there was Elder Bowles's Judah an' Judy; an' Dock Oakes's Silly an' Quilly, arter the Bible folks, Priscilly an' Aquilly, ye know; an' Mis' Bildad Richardson, she called hers—one o' each kind she had—Pollos an' Polly. They growed up, an' I rec'lect how the boys an' gals in meetin' used to look over to Mis' Richardson's pew an' laugh like, when they was singin' that good old hymn that goes to 'Tell Aunt Rhody the gray goose's dead,' or 'Mercy, oh,'—

'Some for Poll an'
Some for Pollos,
Some for Cephas,
None agree.'

"Well, 's I said afore, we was named Phebus an' Pheby. We was twins, an' favored each other in looks, but we wa'n't a mite alike in ways, she an' me. For I was jest a boy, with a real selfish boy natur. I set by fishin' an' shootin' an' trappin'. I was allers outdoors, runnin' an playin', hollerin' an' cuttin' up, full of my play an' my tricks, an' not much use to mother or comfort to her, I callalate. But Pheby, she was jest a soft, lovin', cuddlin' little thing, allers hangin' round mother, coaxin' an' huggin' her, an' keepin' close to her—a real house-cosset of a gal. I don't think there was anything so dreffle wicked in me. I was jest a self-seekin' boy, an' I never once thought mother or anybody expected or wanted kissin' an' cuddlin' an' takin' care on, so 'twas all left to Pheby, an' she done it. Mother—well, she was jest a mother, the real kind: there ain't but one real sort, ye know, though there's lots o' make-bleeve ones. I can't put her into

talk, somehow—you can't never with mothers, ye know—she was—well, she was jest—mother. I knowed what she was allers, 's soon 's I knowed anything; I felt it inside the hull time, when I was fishin' or playin' ball, or settin' traps, but I s'pose I never showed it much in them days, for I was dreffle selfish, 's I tell ye. But, true 's I live, I jest liked mother." He patted the long green mound again, smiled a queer, tearful kind of smile, and went on: "But seein' 's we was so diffunt, an' I was sech a rough, ha'sh kind of a boy, an' Pheby sech a lovin', coaxin' little creetur, 'twas nat'ral—course 'twas—that mother should like her best, set by her a heap more. An' she done it. She never could bear to have her out of her sight; she wanted to see her an' hear her every blessed minute. I might be off all day long, wadin' Tucker Brook, or fishin' down Gale River in the spring, or shootin' pa'tridges an' squir'ls in the fall, or trappin' rabbits an' minks in the winter, an' mother didn't make no fuss over me when I come home. But let Pheby go blueberryin' with the Quimby gals, or over to Almy Appleby's

to play, or even out behind the house to pick dandelion greens, an' mother was allers worryin' an' frettin' an' watchin'. She'd go to the winder an' peek out, an' she'd stand in the door an' watch, an' she'd walk down to the gate, an' she'd call 'Pheby! Pheby!' long before 'twas time to think of her comin' home.

"When I think o' mother, seems 's if I 'most allers see her that one way—standin' on the door-step lookin' out, with her hand held up over her eyes to keep the sunshine out, lookin' an' lookin', kinder pale an' frightened like, watchin' an' waitin' for her little gal. She was allers kinder white an' thin, an' I tell ye she could put a dreffle sight o' lookin'-for an' scariness an' waitin' an' lovin' into them eyes o' hern. They was diffunt eyes from any I ever see; dreffle soft an'—oh, I don't know what they was, not even what color. They wa'n't brown exackly, nor blue quite, nor gray nuther; they was jest mother color, I suppose. I tell you I liked mother.

"An' Pheby, she suited mother another way too; she was kinder pious. Mother was real religious—raised that way. Her folks was

all perfessors, 'way back 's fur 's she knowed about 'em. She come from Haverill, an' her gran'f'ther was deacon in the Congr'ational church there. I didn't take much notice on it then; thought mothers was allers pious; 'twas one of the things made 'em mothers. If she hadn't been so I'd 'a' thought 'twas all right—that mothers hadn't oughter be. But seems diffunt now, an' I like to think on't. I can hear her v'ice lots o' times when I'm settin' here—kind of a lonesome v'ice 'twas—singin' about her kitchen work or over her sewin', 'How lost was my condition,' 'Lord, in the mornin',' 'Oh, happy are they!' 'The Lord into his gardin comes,' 'Broad is the road,' an' 'What var'ous hindrances.' Some of them hymns was pretty scary an' sollum, I can tell ye, for a young one to hear about bedtime. But my! we never minded it a speck when we heerd 'em in mother's kinder softly v'ice to them queer old moth'ry tunes. Why, when I had the earache or a stiff neck, I'd drop off to sleep in a jiffy to sech hymns as 'Stop, poor sinner, stop an' think,' or 'My thoughts on awful subjicks roll,' if 'twas mother sung

'em; and if sometimes I heerd a word that scaret me a minute about chains an' brimstun an' groans an' sech, why, the next minute 'twould be 'His lovin'-kindness, His lovin'-kindness, His lovin'-kindness, oh, how sweet!' in that kinder shakin', soft, comfortin' v'ice o' mother's, an' I'd see 'twas all right, an' I'd drop off agin. But I was jest a boy, bent on my own 'musements, an' didn't think o' bein' pious myself; I left that to mother an' Pheby. For Pheby took to it nat'ral. She l'arnt off hymns by the yard, an' she said hull chapters o' Scripter, an' she allers put away her playthings Sat'day nights without bein' told, an' she read tracts bound up together with leather covers, an' Doddridge's *Rise 'n' Progress.* She'd set still for hours over a life of a missionary an' his wives, an' like it, too. So she was a dreffle comfort to mother that way 's well 's others; an' bimeby she went through all the ne'ssary things—conviction an' convarsion an' all the orthodox 'rangements—an' become a perfessor in the Congr'ational church over to Francony. An' mother was so tickled that Sunday, but 'twas

kind of a sollum tickle, an' I felt lonesome an' left out—for I was a mean-sperrited boy—when she an' Pheby set on the door-step after supper, an' talked, an' read the Bible, an' sung,

> 'Do thou assist a feeble worm
> The great engagement to perform.'

Arter that them two was more together 'n ever, an' went off by theirselves, an' staid in their bedroom, an' mother looked at me real sorrerful. An' Pheby, she talked right out plain to me about my sins, an' asked me real pers'nal questions out o' the village hymn-book, like, 'Say, have you a arm like brass that you His will oppose?' an' 'Is this the kind return?' An' she'd say pieces out o' the last end o' the cat'chism about them pious boys in Scripter, how

> 'Young King Josiah, that blest youth,
> He sought the Lord an' loved the truth,'

an' about

> 'That blessed child, young Timothy,
> Did l'arn God's word most heedfully;
> It seemed to be his recreation,
> Which made him wise unto salvation.'

"So I felt kinder 'shamed, an' staid off an' fished more'n ever, an' showed pretty plain that, 's Pheby said, I had a flinty heart, an' was a stubbun soul. I was a dreffle bad boy, ye see, an' even if I'd sometimes make up my mind to be convarted an' a perfessor, jest to please mother an' take that sorry look out of her eyes, why, the next minute when I was fishin', an' felt a twitch at my line, an' struck a two-pounder, or what felt like one, an' he got off, why, I'd forgit all about meetin's an' mother an' Scripter, an' stay off all day long, an' night too 'most, to git that fish. An' so 'twas—so 'twas.

"But bimeby there come a time when mother decided to move 'way from Sincler's Mill, an' go up into Canady, where she'd got a little piece o' land that had come to her from her folks, an' see if we couldn't do better up there.

"So we packed up our duds an' started. I never shall forgit 's long 's I live how the old place looked 's I left it that day, an' how nice an' snug an' quiet little Francony 'peared as we saw it ahind us, ridin' towards Littleton

that mornin'. I was jest a boy then, full o' my games an' my fishin' an' trappin'. I never was a real boy agin. 'Twas a dreffle journey, 'mong strangers, 'way up into that wild part o' Canady. We had a heap o' trouble to find mother's land, an' when we did it was 'way off in the woods, fur from any folks, with jest a shackly old log house on it. We got a man 't the nearest town to drive us there an' fetch our things, an' when he driv off an' left us, seemed 's if we was outside the world an' all alone. I can't rec'lect much about that time, the gettin' there an' all, 's you'll see when I tell ye what happened. We'd been trav'lin' in the cars with a lot of em'grunts, dirty, furrern kinder folks, an' I s'pose we ketched it o' them. 'Tennerate we hadn't hardly got into that lonesome, empty little cubby-house afore we all three took sick, and found out—mother knowed it; she'd seed it afore—we all had that awful thing, smallpox.

"We was all alone; we couldn't go for help or doctors. If we could 'a' done it, mebbe we wouldn't, we was so afraid they'd carry

us off an' shet us up somewhere for havin' that dreffle complaint about us. So we jest done 's well 's we could, dosin' with ginger-tea an' boneset an' sage an' saffron, for we'd fetched our yarbs along, o' course. I wa'n't 's sick 's t'others: I guess I wouldn't be, for somebody had to keep up an' do. Mother was awful sick an' crazy, an' her eyes got in a dreffle state; and Pheby, she jest went into a sorter stupid, sleepy kinder way, an' I couldn't rouse her up for nothin', not to eat or drink or take her physic. An' 'twa'n't more 'n a few days when she fell faster asleep, an' I couldn't do nothin' to wake her up, an' poor pritty little Pheby was dead 's a nail.

"Dear! dear! dear! There was mother all het up, an' wild, an' 'most blind, not knowin' me nor nobody; little Pheby dead an' cold; an' me nothin' but a boy o' fourteen, an' a real selfish boy too, to do for 'em. Don't make me tell all that—how I dug that little grave an' all, how I put her away, an' had the fun'ral, an' was sexton an' bearers an' minister an' mourners an' all my own self. It's much 's I can do to tell the rest, an' fact is I can't rec'lect

jest what I done, for I wa'n't very healthy myself jest then, an' my head ached to split all the time.

"Fust I thought mother was goin' to die too, but bimeby I see she was gittin' a mite better, all except her eyes; but she couldn't see no more'n a mole. Then I begun to think how I'd ever tell her that Pheby was dead, her little gal that she set by so, an' no one left to her but me, a onconvarted, selfish-natur'd boy.

"I d'know when it fust come in my head what I'd do. Mebbe 'twas when I see she was stun-blind an' sorter feeble-minded yit. Anyhow, it seemed to come right over me someways that I mustn't let on jest then that 'twas Pheby 't was dead, but make her think 'twas jest only me.

"Well, 'twa'n't so dreffle hard at fust. I put on a caliker bed-gown o' Pheby's in case she took hold on me, an' I used to bring her doses an' drinks, an' boost up her head to take 'em, an' she never took no notice who done it. But one day arter I'd laid her down, she reached out an' took hold o' my sleeve, an' she

says, real faint an' whisp'ry, 'Who is it?' I waited jest a minnit to swaller afore I said it, then I says right out, 'It's Pheby, mother.' Somehow—it's queer, ain't it?—I never'd told a real up an' down lie afore in all my born days. Mother didn't like lyin'; an' somehow, with all my dreffle sins, I hadn't 'quired that. So I s'pose my v'ice was kinder shaky; but mother never noticed nothin'; she was so pleased she pulled me down an' kissed me, an' kep' whisp'rin', 'My little gal! my own little gal!' An' arter that she dropped off to sleep like a baby. I set there by her, for she'd got hold o' my hand, an' I tried not to think too hard, for my head wa'n't jest right yit. But I couldn't scasly help wond'rin' how long I could keep it up, an' when she'd find out. An' then —for I was allers a mean, self-seekin' young one—once in a while I'd think how she hadn't said a word about me (the real me, I mean), or whether I was round too. Jest 's if she could be expected to when her heart was full o' Pheby! An' she didn't for a good while. She was jest like a baby—eat an' slept, an' didn't trouble herself about nothin'. 'You're

hoarse an' croupy, Pheby,' she says one time, an' I answered 't I hadn't got my v'ice back yit arter bein' sick. But one day 's I was soppin' her face to cool it off, she seemed to rouse up a mite, an' she says, 'Pheby, where's your brother?'

"I couldn't speak out jest 't fust, an' afore I done it, she says agin, 'Pheby! Pheby! where's Phebus, I say?' I put my head down on the bed, for I was afeared I should bu'st right out cryin', an' afore I'd swallered 'nough to speak, mother says, 'Oh, Pheby, he's dead!' An' I heerd her kinder sob, an' afore I knowed it I found I was goin' to up an' tell her not to cry, for I wa'n't no more dead 'n she was. But next minute she says, wipin' off the tears: 'My poor boy! my poor boy! I hope he was prepared! But oh, my little gal, how glad your ma is that it wa'n't you!'

"Well, I was that onwholesome an' selfish that I felt a speck jealous at fust. But I see I must jest grit up, for I'd got a big job o' work; for, for all I could see, I'd got to be Pheby now the rest o' my days, or mother's days, anyway. An' arter all 's been said an' done, she did sob

at fust when she heerd I was dead. I tell ye, rec'lectin' that sob 's been a big comfort to me lots o' times. For, ye see, I liked mother. Well, she didn't git her sight back, an' somehow she wa'n't never so clear in her head arter her sickness, or mebbe I couldn't 'a' kep' it up 's I did. But my! 'twas hard 'nough 's 'twas. If Pheby 'd been like some gals 'twould 'a' been easier. If she'd been a noisy, tomboy, bouncin' sorter gal, like Liz Jackman now, fond o' playin' with boys an' fishin' an' chasin' squir'ls an' all that, why, I might 'a' got some fun out o' bein' that kind. But to be a Pheby gal, soft an' quiet an' pritty-behaved an' 'fectionate, an', 'bove all, pious, why, it 'most stumped me, I tell ye. You can't s'pose it for yourself, for 't come nat'ral to you. You was born that way, an' didn't have to make no effort; but 'twas strainin' on me.

"At fust, when I was kinder weak an' shaky an' dreffle scaret about mother, 'twa'n't so diff'cult. I moved round softly an' spoke whisp'ry, an' wa'n't so awful diffunt from Pheby. But 's I got more rugged an' mother was better, why, I was allers on the p'int o' doin' some

boy thing or other, an' sometimes I done 'em.

"Time and time ag'in mother 'd look kinder mazed, an' she'd say, 'Pheby Knight, what air ye doin'? Ye seem to 'a' lost all your nice, mannery ways sence I was laid up.' An' I'd rec'lect myself, an' sober down, an' put on my proper, gal ways ag'in, an' say, 'You must scuse me, mother, that dreffle sickness upset me, an' I don't seem to throw it off yit.' An' that allers seemed to 'count for ary queer thing I done. Anyway, I wa'n't so full o' sperrits as afore we left Sincler's Mill. So much trouble an' worryin' an' makin' bleeve an' deceivin' 'd wore on me some, for, 's I told ye, I wa'n't no great of a boy, an' let little things wear on me. One thing was I missed Pheby—the real one—dreffle bad. Sisters is real lux'ries, ye know, any on 'em, an' when you come to a twin, a kinder phillerpener sister, why, it's like a piece o' your own self. An' I couldn't talk about her or cry over her afore mother, for why, *I* was Pheby, ye see, 's fur 's mother was concerned, an' 'twould 'a' seemed like sinful pride. An' then—for I was a stingy, mean-sperrited boy

—I did hanker arter my fishin' an' gunnin' an' trappin'. I'm 'shamed to tell ye how hard 'twas not to try that brook ahind our cabin. I scasly darst look at one spot in it—a kinder dark, deep hole near a stun. I knowed 'most there was a big trout lyin' there in the shadder. You'll jest despise me when I say I run off once with my tackle, an' 'd jest throwed in my line an' seed a break, when mother calls out through the winder by her bed, 'Pheby, Pheby, ye ain't nigh the water, be ye?' I jerked out my line, an' throwed the pole down, an' run back, dreffle 'shamed 'o myself; but I was mean 'nough to think a heap about that break, an' s'mise an' s'mise how much it weighed.

"But the very hardest o' all was the pious part. I hadn't took that into consid'ration when I begun, but it had to come over me 'most the fust day. 'Pheby, won't you read me a chapter?' says mother, in her quav'ry, thin v'ice. Now, though I was an ign'runt, onrighteous boy, I knowed what that meant, an' that 'a chapter' with mother allers went for Scripter. So I went an' got the Bible an' set down by the bed, an' I says, 'What'll I read ye, mother?'

'One of the old chapters, Pheby,' says she. 'You know 'em all; the ones I like.' What was I goin' to do? I *wa'n't* Pheby, an' I *didn't* know 'em all, or ary one on 'em. I never'd took much notice when mother an' Pheby was readin' the Bible, an' even when they'd read to me I was thinkin' in my triflin' way about fishin' an' playin', and didn't pay no 'tention. But I set my teeth an' opened the book. I thought mebbe it would open itself to the right kinder place, so I begun right off, jest where the leaves come apart. But I hadn't scasly begun afore I knowed I was wrong. For it was jest a string o' long names, all Bible names, o' course, an' good in their way, but no more approprit to read to a poor sick Christian than a school deestrick list. I stumbled 'long over Hakkoz an' Hupper an' Malchijer, an' so on, awful scaret, an' knowin' I was on the wrong track, till mother says, 'Pheby, Pheby, what makes you pick out sech a chapter as that? I want suthin' comfortin', some of our fav'rits, ye know.' I tried ag'in, but I was certain I'd go wrong, an' so I did, for I hit on a place about buildin' the tab'nacle, an' it was all about

the len'th bein' so many cubics, an' the breadth so many cubics, an' the height so many cubics —int'restin' information, but no ways comfortin' to that poor blind, troubled soul. So there was nothin' for 't but to make some excuse an' put it off a little. So I said my head ached—an' it did to split—an' I see mother thought the whole thing was 'cause o' that sickness, an' she must jest wait. But, I tell ye, it hurt me dreffle bad to think I could'nt be a comfort to her that way, an' I thought an' thought an' thought what I could do. Pretty soon another thing come up. Mother was low in her mind; 'twas dreffle hard for her to lay there, blind an' sickly, when she'd allers been sech a hard-workin', useful woman, an' when I see her a-cryin' softly to herself, I ast her if there wa'n't nothin' I could do for her, an' she says: 'It makes your head bad to read to me, Pheby, an' ye can't see straight to find the right passages, nuther. But I know ye can jest sing me one of the old hymns, an' that 'll be soothin' an' comfortin'.'

"Oh, deary me! I never could sing much except when playin' games with the boys, an' I didn't know a single hymn or a hymn toon,

while Pheby had a v'ice like a thrush. But I must do suthin', an' quick too. I got out the hymn-book—Pheby know'd 'em all 'thout the book—an I opened it softly ; I didn't darst turn the leaves, I was 'feard they'd rustle, so I had to take the fust varse I come to, an' it was, 'Lo, on a narrer neck o' land.' I couldn't think o' any toon jest that minnit but 'Oatspysbeans'—a kissin' game toon, ye know—an' I struck up on that. It went pretty well to the two fust lines,

> 'Lo, on a narrer neck o' land,
> 'Twixt two onbounded seas I stand,'

but when it come to that third short one, ye know,

> 'But how insensibul,'

it wouldn't go one mite, an' I broke clear down.

"'Pheby Knight,' says mother, 'be ye crazy?' But afore she'd got further'n that I didn't have to make bleeve ; I jest bu'st out cryin'. 'I can't sing, I can't read, I can't do nothin' to help ye now,' I says ; 'but oh, I do like ye, mother!' An' I did.

"Well, agin she put it on to the sickness, an' it passed over that time. But things kep'

happenin'. I worked away at the Bible an' picked out cheerfler passages. I practised hymns, an' got so's I could make 'em go better, an' for a spell I kinder thought I was satisfyin' mother, an' 'pearin' like a good avrige Christian. I felt dreffle mean about it, though. There's things I can't put into talk, but you'll kinder guess at 'em ; sollum, secrety sorter things, like prayin', an' all that, an' whisp'ry little talks about subjicks I didn't know nothin' about. My ! my ! arter one o' them talks, when I'd make bleeve for a spell, with mother talkin' softly an' cryin' —a kinder happy cryin' 'twas—I used to feel for all the airth like some one that had sneaked into the masons' lodge by some mean trick or t'other, an' got hold o' all their secrets. An' 'twa'n't long afore I found 'twas all for nothin' an' wuss too. For one day I come in an' found mother a-cryin' 's if her heart would break, an' when I teased an' pestered her to tell me what the matter was, she jest throwed her arms round me an' says, a-cryin' an' sobbin', ' Oh, Pheby, my little gal, I'm afeard—I'm afeard you've lost your 'surance an' become a backslider!' Then I see I hadn't done it right, arter all, an' that

mother'd seed through me — found me out. Though anyway I hadn't exackly been a back-slider, for I hadn't ever got high up enough to start me on a slide, so to speak. An' then I knowed that I'd got a bigger job afore me 'n I'd ever 'lowed for, an' that if I kep' on bein' Pheby an' pleasin' my poor old mother, I'd got to gin up makin' bleeve in one matter, an' be the real, true, genwine kind.

"I can't tell ye about all that, an' o' course you don't expect it. Somehow 'twa'n't so dreffle hard, arter all, an' once I'd done it, ary other part o' the hull business come easier some way. I got a awful heap o' comfort out on it too. So you see even that was jest part o' my selfish ways. I don't s'pose there ever was a selfisher, mean-sperriteder boy than me them days. But 'twa'n't all smooth sailin', I can tell ye; there's lots o' gal doin's that comes awkerd for a boy. There's mendin', an' patchwork, an' knittin', an' washin', an' irenin', makin' beds, sweepin', dustin', an' all them house things. Makin' soder biscuits 's kinder worryin', ain't it, the fust time? Drawin' tea, too. An' pie. Pie's dreffle difficult till you get the hang on it.

But, deary me! they was triflin' things, arter all; only I allers made so much o' little troubles.

"But I don't know but the biggest piece o' work, when all's said an' done, w'an't l'arnin' how to be 'fectionate, an' have Pheby's little cuddlin' up, kissin', lovin' ways. I never'd been used to it, ye see, an' seemed 's if I couldn't get hold. I rec'lect the fust time I tried to stroke mother's hair 's I'd seen Pheby do, I kep' reachin' out an' haulin' back, reachin' out an' haulin' back, afore I darst touch that hair with my big hard, rough hand. But I had to do it, an' lots o' sech things, for o' course I wa'n't goin' to have mother do without 'em 's long 's she wanted 'em; an' she did; I guess mothers gen'ally does. An' I got a good deal o' sech treatment myself too, an' I liked it, an' was mean enough sometimes to take it all to myself, an' 'most forgit 'twas all for poor little Pheby that wa'n't there to enjoy it. For, ye see, 's I told ye afore, I jest liked mother.

"I don't mean to say that mother never said nothin' 't all bout me—the real true me—for she did. But 'twas allers about my soul, an' how 'feard she was she hadn't done her duty

by it, an' how 'twas mor 'n likely 'twasn't prepared. It was kinder shiv'ry — though that don't exackly seem an approprit word for 't— to hear her dwell on the prob'ble sitwation o' that soul. For 'twas my soul, arter all, though I was makin' bleeve 'twa'n't, an' sometimes I'd try to speak for 't, an' ventur to hope 'twould come out all right, bad 's 'twas. But she never 'peared very hopeful, an' I don't know 's I wonder at it.

"Well, it didn't last very long—this time o' havin' mother all to myself, bein' her fav'rit, her own little gal, to be coddled an' cosseted an' made much on. Mother didn't grow any ruggeder. She got dreffle poor, so 's I could heft her like a baby, an' I had to do for her 'most 's if she was one; she was so weak an' helpless like. An' there come a time when she kep' me close to her ev'ry minnit, night an' day, an' wouldn't scasly let me out her sight. She didn't sleep good, an' I'd set by her in the dark, an' say hymns an' chapters, an' do for her, an' make much on her in my poor rough way, 's much like Pheby's 's I could make it, but pretty diffunt, I guess, arter all.

"An' one o' them nights, 's I set there on the floor, close to the bed, an' it growed kinder cold towards mornin', I drawed a piece o' the counterpane up over me, an' sorter shivered, for I was a great hand to pamper my wuthless body, an' make much o' little trials. An' mother, she tried to wrop the blankets round me, an' she says, 'Poor little gal, poor Pheby, wearin' yourself out for your old mother,' an' then she drawed my face down on the piller, an' she says: 'Pheby, you and me, we both knows I ain't goin' to be here long; an' I'd be dreffle glad to go, blind an' sick 's I am, an' like to be, if 'twa'n't for leavin' you. You've been a good darter to me, Pheby, allers. What should I ever 'a' done without you all these blessed years, partikler this last spell here in Canady, sence your brother died? Poor Phebus, 'twas awful to be took off 's he was, in the midst of his sins; but oh, whatever 'd I done if you'd been took, an' him the one left ahind?' 'Mother,' says I, in a kinder whisper, 'mebbe he'd 'a' tried to help ye, bad 's he was, for—I 'most know, mother, he—liked ye!' 'Well, I s'pose he did,' says mother; 'but he

never showed it much, an' anyway he never could 'a' done for me 's you have, Pheby.' Then she talked to me a long spell. I see she was worryin' an' achin' to think o' leavin' me alone, a little gal, to git on by myself; an' it 'most seemed 's if I must tell her the truth, jest to set her mind to rest. But I knowed it wouldn't do then, she was so weak an' ailin', an' needed Pheby more'n ever to help her through with the last o' things. For I see it all plain enough now—she was goin' to die. She was a-growin' weak real fast. I couldn't leave her a minnit, even to get a doctor nor any help; an' 'twouldn't 'a' been any use, for she was struck with death, I knowed. She said a good many things 's she was able, whisp'rin' most on 'em right into my ear 's I set on the floor there by the bed. But, o' course, 'twas all meant for Pheby. I own up I jest hankered for a word for myself—Phebus, ye know—afore she went off for good; but that was my selfishness, born in me, and 's nat'ral to me 's the breath I breathed.

"'I know,' she says—'I know I'll like it up there, an' I'm so tired out; but, Pheby, I

can't make it seem 's if I'd be contented without you. I'm so used to ye. I'll miss ye dreffly, and I'm afraid ye won't come very soon nuther, for Scripter says your days shall be long in the land, 'cause you've allers honored your mother.' Then she waits a minnit, an' she says agin, puttin' her poor lean hand up to my face, 'Oh, Pheby, I wish I could take ye 'long too; 'twon't seem like home without ye. I'm afeard.I'll be lonesome even there.

> "The fondness of a creeter's love,
> How strong it strikes the sense!"

That's what the hymn says, an' it's true, an' I'll miss ye dreffly, dreffly, Pheby.'

"'Mother,' I says, not all on my own 'count, but wantin' so to comfort her, 'there'll be—Phebus. He ain't much, I know, but—he's one o' your own folks, arter all.'

"'I hope he's there,' says she, kinder mournful; 'but, 'tennerate, he ain't you, my gal. He never was very 'fectionate.'

"'No, mother,' says I, 'he wa'n't; but—mebbe—there's jest a chance, ye know, that he's altered some up there.'

"Agin she didn't seem very sangwine, so I give up tryin' to help her that way. Arter all, 'twould be all right when she once got there.

"Towards the last she begun to tell me, over an' agin, how she should keep on watchin' over me an' interestin' herself in me, if she was 'lowed. 'I guess He'll let me,' she says, kinder weak an' softly. 'He'll see how 'tis, an' how I'm frettin' about ye, an' He'll let me keep my eye on ye.' Arter that she kep' up that one thing. Over an' over she says, 'most to the last minnit, 'Rec'lect, I'll be watchin' ye all the time, Pheby;' an' agin, 'I'll keep my eye on ye, little gal; don't forget that.' So 'twas to the end; jest little bits o' words to Pheby; kinder good-byes an' sayin's about leavin' her, promisin's to watch her an' keep run on her allers. But jest at the very last, when I thought she was act'ally gone, she opened them soft, moth'ry eyes o' hern, thet I thought was shet forever, an' she looked straight up to the rafters, an' she says, real loud an' quick, an' dreffle pleased like, 'Why, Pheby!'

"Deary me! deary me! She'd found me out.

"I don't rec'lect nothin' more for a spell. Seems I was took bad arter that, an' had a long sickness, a sorter head fever o' some kind, so 's I didn't know nothin' nor nobody, an' was crazier'n a loon. But I was took care on. I ain't said nothin' to ye o' the folks that lived nighest our house, for it didn't seem to have much to do with the story about me an' mother. But they was dreffle good people, kinder Frenchy, an' talkin' a queer lingo, but the best o' neighbors. I don't know what we should 'a' done without 'em. Mother never could get the hang o' their talk, but I got so's I could make out a good deal on it, an' they was a heap o' comfort to me afore she died. When I come to myself arter my sickness, there they was a-takin' care o' me, an' doin' for me 's if I'd been their own folks. Cath'lics they was too, but Christians if ever I see one.

"Well, 'twas terr'ble to come to, an' rec'lect mother was gone, an' me the last one o' the fam'ly left; an' fust I couldn't scasly bear

it. But I had to; an' it helped me a good deal to think how she an' Pheby was in the same place now, an' dreffle pleased to be together. But arter a spell there was another kinder consolation come to me, but a selfish sort it was. It was jest this, that mother bein' dead, an' gone where nothin' could never worry her, I could stop bein' Pheby or ary other gal, an' be a boy agin. Oh, ye don't know what that meant to me, for you've allers been one kind. But arter makin' bleeve all them months, wearin' gal's clothes an' actin' out gal ways, why them very words, 'a boy agin,' set me 'most crazy. To think o' whittlin', playin' ball an' marbles, smokin' out woodchucks, goin' in swimmin', throwin' stuns, settin' traps, shootin' squir'ls an' pa'tridges, an' above all, fishin'. Why, I couldn't hardly stan' it, weak 's I was then. When I laid there, all het up an' thirsty an' tired, why I'd keep thinkin' an' thinkin' o' Sincler's Mill, an' Gale River right in front o' the ole house. I could 'most hear the water a-bubblin' over the stuns, an' see the moss, all soft an' wet an' slipp'ry to step on, an' look down into the

dark holes in the shadders where the trout used to lay—I knowed ev'ry single one o' them holes 's well 's if I'd been raised in 'em —an' how I jest hankered an' hankered arter bein' in the old spot, a boy agin! Now you'd 'a' thought, arter all the lessons I'd had, an' the warnin's, that some o' the old selfish ways would 'a' been took out o' me; but no; there they was, an' I 'most forgot mother, Pheby, an' all for a spell, 's I thought over them old times when I was Phebus Knight, an' all gin up to my own self-seekin' pleasures.

"But I'm dreffle glad 'twas only jest for a spell, an' that I come to my right mind arter a little. 'Twas when I was gettin' better, an' 'lottin' on startin' for the old home pretty soon. I'd been thinkin' about mother, an' goin' over in my head all she said an' done, till I come to that last night an' the good-by talk, an' o' course I come to the thing she kep' sayin' up to the end: 'I'll keep my eye on ye, Pheby; I'll watch ye all the time.' An' all on a sudden it come over me what that meant, an' what I'd got to do. Ye see, I knowed mother an' Pheby bein' together

now would talk over things, an' mother'd see how 'twas, an' that Pheby was reely the one that died, an' that 'twas me, Phebus, that had took care on her an' done Pheby's part. I knowed that mother bein' a mother, one o' the real sort, an' Pheby bein' a soft-hearted little gal, an' my twin too, they'd make more'n they'd oughter o' what I'd done, an' me bein' away an' all, they'd begin to feel kinder sorry for me, an' mother in partikler 'd fret about it, an' wish I hadn't had to give up all my boy doin's an' be a gal so long for her sake. Oh, I knowed mother, ye see, an' could tell jest how she'd worry about me, an' how 'twould half spile ev'rything up there in her new hum. Seemed 's if I could 'most hear her sayin': 'Oh, Pheby, I can't bear to think o' that poor boy, how he gin up his fishin' an' all, an' wored your clothes, an' jest stayed round me day an' night, so's I shouldn't miss a darter's care. An' he so selfish by natur an' fond o' his own 'musements.' I kep' hearin' that talk, in mother's fretty, sorry v'ice, an' I couldn't stand it no longer. I knowed she was allers a woman of her word, an' she had her eye

on me now. An' when she seed me tickled to death at bein' free agin, throwin' off my gal duds an' my gal ways, an' goin' back to my rough play an' my boy doin's, it would stren'then her all the more in her 'pinion, an' she'd jest fret an' fret about all I'd gone through, an' how I'd done it all for her, an' she never'd had a chance to thank me for't. Well, o' course you see that the selfishest boy livin' wa'n't goin' to have heav'n spiled for his mother jest 's she'd got there, if he could do anything to help it. So 't seemed plain enough that I'd got to gin up any little idee I'd had about goin' back to be a boy agin, an' keep on makin' bleeve. I knowed I could do it; I'd kep' it up so long, it come quite easy an' nat'ral now, an' I felt cert'in I could make mother bleeve I reely enjoyed bein' a gal, an' what's more to the p'int, that I had enjoyed it, an' she'd see she needn't fret no great about me an' my givin' up anything for her, for I'd done it jest for fun like, an' 'cause I reely liked it.

"So there ain't much more to tell, ye see. Course 's soon 's I see what any right-minded

boy 'd a-seen at fust, why I wa'n't quite so mean, arter all, 's not to do it. So I jest kep' on. 'Tain't much, when ye come to think on 't. I'd done it for a long spell, an' I kep' on. There was jest one thing I couldn't do at fust, an' that was go back to Sincler's Mill. I dassent, ye see; I'd been sure to backslid, set me once in sight o' Gale River, an' Tucker Brook, an' the woods round the old place. So I stayed round there a spell, an' then I went off to one place arter another. I don't rec'lect jest what I have done. It don't seem very long one way; time's got by somehow. I've been sick a good deal, I guess. From what they tell me, I s'pose I've had some 'tacks o' that kind o' head fever that come over me arter mother died. But 'twa'n't a ketchin' complaint, so folks used to take me in an' do for me; an' somehow I've had a very comf'table time, consid'rin'.

"An' I callalate I've sat'sfied mother by this time that I like women ways an' women clothes better than t'other sort. I come back here arter a spell; thought I could stand it better'n at fust. An' I'm dreffle glad I done

it. For, ye see, this place here's such a sat's-faction to me. Mother an' Pheby's buried in Canady, ye know. It was pretty hard to leave 'em there, an' not have nothin' to do for 'em to occ'py my mind like. But one time I happened to drop in here an' see this place, jest like a ready-made cem'tery. Course I knowed it wa'n't one; but arter makin' bleeve so long, what's one more bleeve makin'? So I picked out two graves for theirn—this long one for mother's, an' this little one for Pheby's; an' I jest take care on 'em. It's a dreffle comfort.

"I won't say that I 'ain't had a r'lapse 'casionally an' forgot I wa'n't a boy, but I allers rec'lected arter a spell, an' afore mother'd noticed anything, I guess. Why, it's only jest a few days sence one time I was settin' here knittin', an' I heerd Snide, 'Gene Elliott's black dog, ye know, a-barkin' an' whinin' an' yelpin'. An' I looked over in the medder, 'cross the road, an' there he was a-scratchin' up the sod, makin' the dirt fly, an' shakin' an' cryin' with excitement, like a Christian. I knowed he'd got a woodchuck there in his hole; an' I

forgot ev'ry blessed thing I'd oughter remembered, an' started for that hole. I throwed my knittin' down, held up my apern, an' run, a-callin' out: 'Good old Snide! take him, Snide! take him!' I was half-way there, an' Snide he was waggin' his tail an' barkin' to me to hurry, when all on a sudden it come over me what I was a-doin'. I looked up quick to see if anybody up there had her eye on me; then I picked up my knittin', smoothed my apern, an' I says, real loud an' plain: 'I wonder if Nervy Eaton won't show me that new stitch she was tellin' on? I'd like to make a tidy. An' mebbe I'd better set some bread to-night; it's bakin' day to-morrow.'

"I don't go very frequent to Sincler's Mill. It's kinder lonesome out there now. The old mill's all gone to rack, an' our house 's a shackly old thing—doors an' winders gone, an' things tumblin' to pieces. I was out there t'other day, though, lookin' round, an' thinkin' o' them times when I used to live there an' was a boy, with a hum, an' a twin-sister, an' —a mother. It kinder brought back things. Why, come to think on't, I 'ain't lived a mite

like what I thought I was goin' to when I used to lay out things there 's I was fishin' or settin' round in the woods. I was 'most sure for a long spell that I'd be a pirate; or, agin, I kinder laid out to be a big hunter, to kill lions an' tigers an' sech wild creeters. Seems to me I was all for bein' a sea-cap'n one time, an' goin' whalin', an' killin' polar-bears on the ice. My! I 'ain't done one o' them things. I've jest gone on my own selfish way, allers doin' nothin' for nobody. I was a-standin' near the river, jest acrost from the old house, a-lookin' at it. I didn't exactly like to go inside on 't, 'twas so lonesome, an' yer steps sounded so holler when you walked on the floor. But I looked at the old place a long spell. The door was gone, but the door-way was there, an' part of the steps, an' 's I was lookin' I see—right there, 's plain 's I see you now—I see mother. She was standin' right in the door-way. She had on a kinder indiger blue dress she used to wear a good deal, with white spriggles on it, an' a little hank'chief round her neck, an' she looked jest as nat'ral. She was lookin' down the road, hold-

in' up her hand over her eyes to keep the sun out, an' she was lookin' an' lookin', kinder pale an' scairt like, with a kinder watchin' an' waitin' an' wantin' look in her eyes—them soft, moth'ry eyes o' hern. She didn't speak, but jest 's I see her, why right out from under the bank, close by me, a little brown bird flew out, an' he says, loud an' clear, but kinder mournful like, 'Pheby! Pheby!' I tell ye I couldn't scasly stand it; an' whenever I think on 't now, it kinder upsets me. An' I look up through them tree-tops, with my eyes so wet it makes things all sorter dazzly, an' true 's I live I can see mother's face jest 's plain. She's lookin' out of a kinder door-way, an' her eyes is jest the same old mother color, so soft an' lovin', an' she's got a sorter anxious, waitin', watchin', wantin' look in 'em. An' I says to myself: 'Why, what's the matter o' mother now? Pheby's to hum. I wonder if she's expectin' anybody else?'"

VII.

A SPEAKIN' GHOST.

"Stay, illusion!
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,
Speak to me:
If there be any good thing to be done,
That may to thee do ease, and grace to me,
Speak to me!"

Hamlet.

A SPEAKIN' GHOST.

YES, I do bleeve in 'em—in one of 'em, tennerate. An' I know why you ask me if I do. Somebody's put you up to it, so's you can make me tell my ghost story. Well, you're welcome to that if you want it. It's no great of a story, but it's true; an' arter all, that's the main p'int in a story—ghost or no ghost.

Well, I s'pose I'll s'prise you when I say it all happened in New York city. Seein' me here in Kitt'ry, an' knowin' my name's Jenness —a real Kitt'ry an' Portsmouth an' Rye name —why, o' course you'd take it for granted I'd allers lived round here, an' all my happenin's had been in this local'ty. Well, you're right one way. I was born about here, an' come of good old Scataqua River stock. My father was Andronicus Jenness, born an' raised in Rye, an' the fust thing I rec'lect we was livin' in Portsmouth, on the old Odiorne's P'int road.

There was father 'n' mother, three boys—

Amos, Ezry, an' Peleg — an' me, Mary Ann, the oldest o' the family an' the only girl. It's the ghost story you want to hear, so I ain't goin' to bother you with anything else.

But that time I lived there in the old red house, with my own folks round me — 'pears to me now the only time I did ever reely live. We was pretty well to do, we had a good home, an' we was all together. Father was a good man, mother the very best o' women, an' I was dreffle fond on 'em. An' the boys, they was just rugged, noisy, good-natur'd chaps, that kep' the house lively enough, I can tell you. But when I was nigh on to twenty-five, an' the boys was twenty an' seventeen an' fifteen, it all ended, that life in the old red house. Father an' my three laughin', high-sperrited, pleasant-spoken boys, was all drownded at once, one day in September. They went out in a sail-boat, a storm come up — 'twas the beginnin' of the line gale — an' their boat capsized; an' them that went out rugged an' big an' healthy, laughin' back at ma an' me as we stood at the door to see 'em off, was fetched back stiff an' wet an' cold, an' so dreffle still. I

never'd seen the boys still afore in all their lives.

Mother never held up her head arter that day, an' afore the new year come in she'd follered pa an' the boys. It left me dreffle lonesome. You couldn't 'a' broke up a fam'ly in all that section that'd 'a' took it harder. For we'd allers set so much by each other, an' done ary thing we could to keep together an' not be sep-'rated, an' there we was, all broke up at once, an' the old house nothin' now but a dry holler shell. I didn't want, o' course, to rattle round in it longer'n I could help. I got red on it 's fast as I could, an' went over to Rye. I knowed how to work an' wa'n't afraid of it, an', o' course, the more I had to do jest then the better for me. For I was stupid an' scared an' sore with the dreffle trouble that come on me so quick an' suddin, an' I was so terr'ble lonesome.

Well, I s'pose 'twas because I'd allers liked boys, an' was used to havin' 'em round, an' because, too, o' my missin' my own boys so bad, that I got a place at fust in Mr. Sheaf's school. 'Twas a boys' school, an' they took me for a

kind of house-keeper—to see to things generally. 'Twas a sort of comfort—as much as anything in this world could be a comfort—to see the boys an' do for 'em. I had a little place to myself right off the school-room, an' there I used to do my mendin' an' everything I could contrive to do for an excuse to stay right there, where I could see an' hear them boys. 'Twas a kind of eddication jest to hear 'em go over their lessons—their jography an' rethmetic an' grammar—an' partikly their readin' an' sayin' pieces. Ev'ry speakin' day—Friday 'twas—I was allers on hand, never losin' a word, an' sometimes I'd practise the boys 'forehand till they knowed their pieces perfect. I stayed there about six months, an' I hoped I could stay there the rest o' my days. But even that poor comfort had to be took away; for Mr. Sheaf's health broke down; he give up the school an' moved away. So I lost even them borrered boys, who'd been in a sort o' way helpin' to fill up the places o' my own. An' so agin I was left terr'ble lonesome. I didn't know what to do, nor care much. So, when I had an opp'tunity to go to New York I took it.

'Twas a lady who'd had a boy at the school, an' had been there herself an' seen me. Mis' Davis she was, an' she writ to know if I'd come on to stay in her house through the summer, an' do for her pa, while she an' her children was off to the country. As I said afore, I didn't much care what I done, I was so lonesome an' mis'rable; so I said I'd go.

But if I'd been lonesome afore, I was a hunderd times lonesomer there. I never'd been in a big city afore, an' I'd kind o' thought 'twould be folksy an' 'livenin' an' cheerful. But 'twa'n't a mite like that. The house was mostly shet up an' dark. Mr. Rice—Mis' Davis's pa—was off all day long, took his dinner an' supper to a tavern somewheres, an' was only to home to sleep an' eat his breakfast. I didn't have much of anything to do. I had a big down-stairs room they called the front basement to set in. It had two windows on the street, but 'twas so low down that you couldn't see much out of 'em without screwin' your neck an' peekin' up. There was lots o' folks passin' by all the time, but you couldn't scasly see anything but their feet an' legs. An' oh, the noise o' the wagons

an' cars! It made me 'most crazy at fust, but bimeby I got a little used to it. But I thought I should jest die o' homesickness. How I'd think an' think an' think o' the old days an' the old house on the Odiorne's P'int road! How diff'rent it was from this city one! The old home was so quiet an' still outside, an' so noisy an' lively in-doors; an' the city house was so noisy an' lively out-doors, an' so dreffle still an' quiet inside.

An' 'twas right there in the front basement o' that city house that I see the ghost. 'Twa'n't like ary other ghost I ever heerd on. Them I've read about mostly wore white sheets, an' looked dreffle skully an' bony, an' kind o' awful. One o' that sort would 'a' scaret me, I know; but this one—why, I never felt a mite scaret from the very fust. Fact is, I never knowed 'twas a ghost for a spell, for it looked like a boy, jest a common, ord'nary boy; an' 'twas a speakin' one. I don't mean one that talked, but a speakin' one that spoke pieces.

I don't think I smelt pepp'mint the fust time it come. I don't rec'lect it anyway, but allers arter that I did. I was settin' in the front

basement when it come. 'Twas between five an' six in the arternoon, light enough still outdoors, but kind o' dusky in my down-stairs room. I wasn't doin' anythin' jest then but settin' in my chair an' thinkin'. I don't know what 'twas exackly that made me look up an' across the room, but I done it; an' there, standin' right near the table an' lookin' at me, was the ghost; though, 's I said afore, I didn't know it for a ghost then; it looked like a boy. But he wasn't a city boy, nor like any one I'd seen for a long spell. He was about fourteen or fifteen, I should think, an' he wa'n't no way pretty to look at, but I liked him from the fust minute. He was real freckled, but that never was a great drawback to me; an' he had kind o' light, reddish-yellow hair, not very slick, but mussy an' rough like. His eyes was whity-blue, an' he hadn't much in the way o' eye-winkers or eyebrows. An' his nose was kind o' wide, an' jest a mask o' freckles, like a turkey egg. So, you see, he wa'n't much to look at for beauty, but I took to him right off. I knowed he was from the country 's soon as I see him. Any one could tell that. His hands was red

an' rough an' scratched, an' he had warts. Then his clothes showed it too. You could see in a jiffy they was home-made, an' cut over an' down from his pa's. There was a sort o' New Hampshire look about him too, an' I felt a real drawin' to him right off. I was jest a mite s'prised to see him standin' there, for I hadn't heerd a knock or anything, but afore I could speak an' ask him what he wanted, he stepped up in front o' me, an' says, sort o' quick an' excited like,

"Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?"

An' afore I had time to say that yes, bless his little heart, I jest would, he begun:

> "My name is Norvle; on the crampin' hills
> My father feeds his flock,"

an' a lot more about his folks, an' all so pretty spoken an' nice. When he'd done he drawed one foot up to t'other an' made a bow, real polite, an' then he stood stock-still agin. O' course I praised him up, said he'd spoke his piece beautiful, an' asked him if he wouldn't like a cooky. I got up an' went to the pantry

to get some, but when I turned round to ask him if he liked sugar or m'lasses best, he'd gone. I thought 'twas pretty suddin, but then I s'posed he was bashful, an' had took that way o' leavin' to save talk an' fuss. I looked out o' the winder to see if he was round, but there wa'n't a sign on him, an' I give him up. An' 'twas jest then I begun to smell pepp'mint. But I didn't put the two things—the boy an' the pepp'mint—together then; not till some time arterwards.

Well, you don't know how it chirked me up, that little visit. To be sure, it had been real short an' unsat'sfact'ry. He hadn't never told me one word about hisself—where he come from, who he was, nor anything. But that didn't seem to make no diff'rence to me. I felt 's if I knowed him real well, an' his folks afore him; an' somehow, too, I had a feelin' that he'd come agin, an' I'd find out all I wanted to about him an' his belongin's. But thinkin' about him an' his call an' all made the time pass real quick, an' 'twas bedtime afore I knowed it—the fust evenin' sence I come there that I hadn't jest longed for

nine, an' looked at the clock twenty times an hour.

The next day slipped by in the same slippety way, for I was goin' over in my mind what he'd done an' said, an' s'posin' an' s'posin' who his folks was, an' all that.

About the same time o' day, towards six o'clock or so, I set down in the same place by the winder an' begun to watch for him. He hadn't said he'd come, but I had a strong feelin' inside that he was goin' to. An' he did. But 'twa'n't out o' the winder I see him. For I begun to smell a strong pepp'minty kind o' smell agin, an' I turned to look up at the shelf where I kept my med'cines to see if the bottle was broke or the stopple out, an'—there stood the ghost. Though even then I never dreamed 'twas a ghost. I thought 'twas jest a boy. He was standin' across the room, jest where I fust see him, by the table, an' lookin' straight at me. An' afore I could say a word he started right for me, an' says, lookin' real bright an' int'rested, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?" An' off he went as glib as could be. I can't, for the life o' me, rec'lect

what 'twas he spoke that time. I get the pieces mixed somehow them days, afore the time come when they meant somethin', an' I begun to take in their meanin's. Mebbe 'twas

"At midnight when the sun was low,"

or it might be

"On Linden in his gardin tent,"

for I know he spoke them some time. Tennerate he said off something. An' when he'd done he drawed up his foot an' bowed real nice. I clapped my hands an' praised him up, an' then I begun to ask questions. I wanted to know what his name was, where he come from, who his folks was, how he knowed about me, why he come, an' lots o' things. He stayed quite a long spell, an' I did jest enjoy that talk. Bimeby I went into the closet to get something to show him, an' when I come back, he was gone agin. 'Twa'n't till some time arter he'd left that I rec'lected that though it seemed 's if I'd had a good talk with him, I'd done it all my own self, an' he never

'd said one single word—nothin', I mean, but that one thing he allers said, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?"

An' yet somehow I knowed lots more about him than afore. In the fust place, I'd come to feel cert'n sure his name was Norvle, an' that he wa'n't only speakin' a piece about that, but meant it for gospel truth. An' arter that I never thought o' him by any other name. An' I did think o' him lots. For even in them two little visits, when I'd done most o' the talk myself, I'd got dreffle fond on him. You know I allers liked boys, partikerly boys raised in the country deestricks. An' up to this time an' quite a spell arterwards I never guessed he was anything but a boy, jest a common, ord'nary boy. Well, he kept comin'. Every single arternoon, jest about six o'clock, or a speck earlier or later, I begun to smell a sort o' pepp'minty smell, an' in come that boy, walked up to me, with his eyes all shinin', lookin' pleased an' sort o' excited, an' says, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?"

Then he'd speak. They was diff'rent kinds

o' pieces; some was verses an' some wasn't. But they was all nice, pretty pieces. There was one I remember about a boy standin' on the deck of a ship afire, an' how he stood an' stood an' stood, an' wouldn't set down a minute. Another r'lated to the breakin' waves, an' how they dashed up real high. An' there was a long one that didn't rhyme, about Romans an' countrymen an' lovers; he did speak that jest beautiful.

Then he'd hold out one arm straight an' tell how nobody never heerd a drum nor a fun'ral note the time they buried somebody in a awful hurry. Agin he'd start off speechifyin' about its bein' a real question arter all whether you hadn't better be, or hadn't better not be. That one seemed to be a kind o' riddle; not much sense to it. An' there was a loud one where he jest insisted that our chains is forged. "Their clankin'," he says, "may be heerd on the plains o' Boston." I b'lieve 'twas in that one he kep' a-sayin', "Let it come; I repeat it, sir, let it come. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace, but there ain't no peace," an' so on. Real el'quent 'twas, I hold.

An' I growed so proud o' that boy. By this time I knowed a good deal about him, for I'd have long talks with him 'most every day. That is, I thought I was havin' long talks with him; but allers, arter he'd gone, I'd rec'lect he hadn't really said anything. But tennerate, strange as it seems, I did know lots more about him every time. As I said afore, his name was Norvle. His folks was plain farmin' people. You know he spoke of his pa's keepin' sheep the fust time he come. An' 'twas up in the mountins they lived; prob'ly somewheres in the White Mountins, this State. I know once he spoke o' Conway 's if he lived round there. That was in a piece about there bein' jest seven children in their fam'ly. He was real partikler about the quantity, an' kep' callin' attention to the fact that there was exackly seven; no more, no less. He says,

> "Two of us at Conway dwells,
> An' two has gone to sea";

an' he went on to say,

> "Two of us in the church-yard lays,"

(that was him an' another, I s'pose now), but still says he,

"Seven boys an' girls is we."

I was sorry he hadn't been brought up near the water as my boys had, with the great big sea to look at an' sail on. No wonder he spoke o' the crampin' hills. It allers seemed to me dreffle crampin' to be shut up amongst the hills an' away from the salt-water.

An' now he was off from home an' real lonesome, so 'twas a comfort to him to come over an' see me, a plain, self-respectin' countrywoman, like his ma an' his aunts. So I about made up my mind to take charge on him, do for him, an'—if his folks would let me—sort o' adopt him, in the place o' my own boys layin' in Portsmouth graveyard.

I never 's long 's I live shall forgit the day I found out he wa'n't a boy, a common, ord'nary boy, but a ghost. He'd jest come in, an' was sayin' his piece, when the grocer come to the door with some things.

"Wait a minute, Norvle," I says, for I didn't like to lose a word of his speeches, I liked 'em

all so, an' I went to the door. But as I opened it an' let the man in, I heerd the boy goin' right on speakin'. So I says to the grocer man, in a kind o' whisper, beck'nin' as I spoke, "Jest come in an' hear this boy!" For I was real proud of him, an' glad of a chance to show him off.

The man looked rather s'prised, but he follered me in, an' we both stood there by the door, list'nin' to the little feller. That is, *I* was list'nin' with all my ears, for 'twas one o' his very best, about England may 's well 'tempt a dam up the waters o' the Nile with bulrushes. But when I looked round at the man, smilin' at him an' noddin' my head, 's if to say, "Ain't he smart?" I see he wa'n't 'pearin' to hear anything 'tall. He was lookin' at me, an' then round, an' seemin' so dumfoundered.

"What's the matter o' you?" he says. "What's up?"

Norvle was jest closin' then, an' I waited till he'd made his bow, an' then I says agin, "Wait a minute, Norvle, an' then we'll have our talk." Then I turned round to the grocer, an' I says, "Don't he speak fust-rate?"

"What you talkin' about?" says he. "Got a sunstroke?"

Somehow I knowed all at once that he wa'n't foolin', an' that he didn't see nor hear what I see an' hear so plain, so plain. An' I knowed more'n that, for that one little thing opened my eyes that I jest wouldn't open till then, 'an I couldn't shet 'em agin. I felt queer an' dizzy, my head swum, an' I put out my hands to keep from fallin'. The man stiddied me, helped me into my chair, fetched me some water, an' I was well enough arter a little to speak. I told him I felt better, an' he could go; so he went away. I looked for Norvle, but he wasn't there. There was jest a little smell o' pepp'mint in the air, but the boy'd gone. I was glad he had, for I wanted to be all alone for a spell.

Well, you can't understand anything about what I went through then; nobody can. To folks I'm jest a queer old woman who tells a com'cal ghost story out of her stupid old head. It wa'n't very com'cal to me that day. For I'd got so fond o' that boy. I allers liked 'em; an' I'd lost all I ever had. An' now this

one had come to me when I was so lonesome an' low in my mind, an' I'd gone an took him right into my heart. An' he wa'n't a boy at all, but a ghost! That meant so much. Queer 's it seems, the fust thought that struck me was this: he wa'n't *he* or *him*, but jest *it*. Then I remembered how I'd planned some new clothes for him. But ghosts don't wear out their clothes. An' I'd meant—if his folks would let me—to adopt him; bring him up like my own. How ever could I adopt a ghost? Wa'n't it impossible? Come to think o' it, could I have dealin's in any way with a ghost? We'd allers been a respect'ble family; none more so in all New Hampshire; a religious fam'ly too, orth'dox, every single one. Never, 's fur 's I'd heerd, was there a ghost of any kind mixed up with ary branch o' the Jennesses for gen'rations. To be sure, there was a story of one that appeared to one o' the Fosses, connected by marriage with the Jennesses, 'way back fifty years or more. But that one never showed itself; 'twas only a sort o' weepin' an' groanin' an' complainin' noise goin' through the house at night. An' they

never encouraged it a mite, but sent for old Parson Williams an' had him pray at it till it cleared out. Then they aired the house thoroughly, an' never had a sign of it agin. But here was I talkin' with one, 'sociatin' with it, gettin' fond on it, an' really talkin' of adoptin' it. What was I goin' to do? What was I goin' not to do? Over an' over in my mind I went at that, an' little sleep I got that night, I tell you. As I said afore, we was brought up in a pious fam'ly, an' my religion, small 's it was to what it oughter been, had brought me through all my troubles so fur, as nothin' else could 'a' done. So I prayed a good deal that night, an' read my Bible lots. An' bimeby—'most mornin' 'twas—I begun to get red o' that whirlin', scaret kind o' thinkin', an' to look at things stiddier an' easier. Mebbe 'twas the prayin'; anyway I got all o' a suddin so 's to see the matter reasonable an' cipher it out plain for myself. 'Twas about this way I went at it. Fust place I says to myself: "What's a ghost, anyway? Why, it's a sperrit. An' what's a sperrit? Why, it's a soul. Well, there ain't no harm in a soul; we've all got 'em. But then,"

thinks I to myself, "what's this soul doin' here? Where's it been sence the boy died?" Well, you see, I knowed too much about heaven, from Scripter an' sermons an' all, to think that a soul that once got there would leave it to traipse round here agin an' speak pieces. So I had to feel cert'in it hadn't ever got to heaven 'tall. An' as for the other place—why, you never, never in the world, could 'a' made me bleeve that Norvle had been there. He wa'n't that kind, I knowed. 'Twasn't jest because I'd got so fond o' him, but I felt sure, sure, sure that he'd never been there, in that awful suf-f'rin' an' sin. He'd a showed it if he had. Now you see I was orth'dox, an' my folks afore me, an' I'd never even heerd that any one thought there might be another place besides them two local'ties. Sence then I've read somewheres that there is sexes who bleeve that, but I'd never heerd a hint of it then. But seein' that he hadn't been to ary o' them two places, then where had he been, an' why did he come to me? When I got to that p'int I had to stop short agin, an havin' nothin' better to do, I went to prayin'. An' jest 's the morn-

in' light shone into my window, there come a light shinin' right into my heart, an' I see it all. 'Twas this way. Norvle hadn't been fetched up by religious folks. For, strange 's it may seem, there's people like that, even in a Christian land. He'd been a well-meanin' boy, an' if he'd ever been learnt he'd 'a' took right hold o' religion, an' glad enough too. But he lived 'way off in the mountins, there wa'n't no meetin'-house within miles, an' his folks was like heathen. Even the deestrick school was too fur off for him to go, or else his pa wouldn't spare him to 'tend. So he'd growed up ign'runt of all he'd oughter know, never seein' a Bible, hearin' a sermon, or touchin' a cat'chism in all his life. He'd learnt how to read somehow, an' up in the garret he'd come acrost a book o' pieces sech as boys speak to school. An' he'd took to 'em, studied 'em, an' got so he could say 'em all. But he had to do it all by hisself. Nobody ever heerd him say 'em. Nobody would listen when he tried to show off. That's terr'ble hard on a boy. They like so to be praised up an' noticed when they've done anything. Why Peleg, the youngest o'

my three boys, you know, allers set so by my lookin' at his whittlin', or hearin' him sing, or praisin' the pictur's he drawed on his slate. But bimeby Norvle died; I don't know how. I never was able to find that out; whether 'twas o' sickness or an accident. But he died without ever havin' been grounded in the right things. An'—oh, don't you see it now? Don't you know what come to me that early mornin', as I laid cryin' an' prayin' in my bed there? He—I mean *it*, Norvle's poor little ign'runt soul—had been let to come to me; me that loved boys an' had lost 'em all. An' I was to be the one to learn it what he hadn't never had a chance to pick up afore he died. So I see I needn't stop bein' fond o' it, but go on lovin' it harder an' harder, till I'd loved it right straight up into heaven, where it would 'a' been now but for lack o' information.

I tell you that was a solemn day to me. I was happy one way, sorry another, an' I felt such a awful responsibility. I tell you 'tain't many that has sech a heft put on 'em as that. Jest think of it! the hull religious trainin' of a ghost! I was busy all day preparin' for it. I

looked up all my books, the ones I used when I learnt the boys, an' the Sabbath-school ones. An' I made a kind o' plan how I was to begin, an' how long 'twould take to go through all the doctrines an' beliefs. Our folks was Congregationals, an' though I wa'n't as set in my ways about my own Church as some be, still, as Norvle didn't seem to have any partikler leanin' to ary other belief, I meant to bring him up as I'd been brought. So o' course I had to begin with the fall, an' I studied on that 'most all day. As the time drawed nigh for the visit I was dreffle worked up. Seemed 's if I couldn't scasly bear it, to see the boy I'd got so attached to an' built so much on, an' know that he wa'n't a boy at all, but a ghost. I was settin' there, in my old seat by the window, an' for quite a spell arter the pepp'mint scent come into the room I wouldn't turn my head. Fact is, I was cryin' so 't I could hardly see out of my eyes. But bimeby I looked round, an', jest 's I thought, there it stood. My eyes was pretty wet, but I winked out the water 's well 's I could. An' 's soon 's I could see its face plain, I knowed that it knowed I

knowed. It didn't have that pleased, shinin' look in its eyes, but was sort o' doubtful an' scary. It stepped slow an' softly, as if it was goin' to stop every step, an' when 'twas in front o' me, it said, almost in a whisper, an' so mournful, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?"

I brushed the water out o' my eyes an' says, real hearty an' cordial, "Yes, deary, course I do."

He begun in sech a low, shaky voice:

"Here rests his head upon the lap of airth,
A youth to fortin an' to fame unknown."

Poor little feller! I jest ached for him, an' my throat felt all swelled up 's if I had the quinsy. I made up my mind that minute to give up the rest o' my days, if it took that long, to savin' that little soul o' Norvle's. An' he shouldn't never feel, if I could help it, that I didn't exackly approve o' ghosts, or thought a mite less o' him for bein' one. Then I begun my religious teachin'. As I said afore, my startin'-p'int was the fall. But o' course I had to allude to the creation fust, Adam an'

Eve, an' all that. Then I larnt him the verse out o' the New England Primer about "In Adam's fall," an' that led right up, you see, to 'riginal sin, nat'ral depravity, an' all that relates to them doctrines. I had to begin jest as you would with a baby, you see, right at the el'mentary things. Then I took the Westminster Shorter, an' learnt him from "man's chief end" to the decrees. 'Twas a short lesson, but I didn't want to tire him the fust time. He seemed real int'rested, an' I forgot for a minute he was a ghost, an' I says, "Norvle, s'pose you take this cat'chism home, an'—" I stopped right off short, for I rec'lected he hadn't got any home, but was jest a wand'rin', ramblin', uneasy ghost. An' oh, where did he sleep nights? Thinkin' o' that made the tears come agin, an' I turned away to sop 'em up. When I looked round, it was gone.

You see I say "it" sometimes, an' then agin I say "him." I know I'd oughter say "it" all the time; but—well, 'way down in my old heart it's "him" an' "he" allers, an' he's no diff'nt from my other three boys.

I was a mite nervous next time. I wasn't

quite certin I'd gone to work right with my lessons. I'd had some exper'ence teachin', what with my own boys an' a Sabbath-school class. But how did I know but a ghost's mind was all diff'ent, an' couldn't take in the same things in the same way? Then he didn't have no books, an' couldn't look over the lesson at home. So mebbe—I kep' sayin' to myself—he don't remember a single word about Adam, or his sin, an' the terr'ble consequences. But I needn't 'a' worried; for I hadn't hardly time to answer that same old question, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?" afore he started off:

"Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then me an' you an' all on us fell down."

Could a perfessor in the the'logical sem'nary 'a' put it better? The real cat'chism doctrine, you see, "all mankind by the fall," an' so on. So I begun to feel encouraged. This time I took foreord'nation an' election, an' easy things like that. Eternal punishment goes along o' that lesson by rights, but 'twas sech a pers'nal subjeck for that poor soul that I skipped it that

once. So it went on day arter day. I didn't allers keep to the doctrines. I made 'lowances for Norvle's bringin' up, an' had more int'restin' things now an' agin, like who was the fust man, the strongest man, the meekest man, an' them. An' seein' he was so fond o' pieces, I learnt him pretty verses out o' the New England Primer, like

"Vashti for pride
Was set aside,"

or

"Elijah hid,
By ravens fed."

He was so tickled with that piece about

"Good children must
Fear God all day,
Parents obey,
No false thing say,"

an' so on. An' he liked about John Rogers, an' Agur's prayer, an' took right off to that advice at the very eend o' the Primer, by the late rev'rent an' ven'rable Mr. Nathan'el Clap, o' Newport, on Rhode Island.

But the days was slippin' by, an' I begun to worry. 'Twas September now, an' my time

was up early in October, for the fam'ly was comin' home then. An' go 's fast 's I could I hadn't been able to git beyond "the mis'ry o' that estate whereinto man fell" in the cat'chism, an' the buildin' o' the temple in the Bible. All about sin an' punishment an' the old dispensation, you see, an' never a speck o' light an' hope for that poor sperrit. For o' course I had to go reg'lar an' take subjecks as they come, an' didn't dast skip over into the New Test'ment comfort till its turn come. I was in a heap o' trouble about it, when all of a suddin another chance was give me. Old Mr. Rice come to me with a letter in his hand, an' asked me if I couldn't be induced to stay on an' take care o' the house through the winter. Seems that one o' the children—Mis' Davis's, I mean—had took cold, an' its throat or lungs or something was weak. So the doctor had ordered them to take her 'crost the water, an' they was goin' right off, without comin' home at all. Wasn't it wonderful? A int'position o' Providence, cert'in sure, an' I thanked the Lord on my bended knees. I kep' on now in the reg'lar way, not havin'

to hurry, givin' all the time I wanted to the doctrines. For there's nothin' like bein' well grounded in them. Norvle never said much, but he showed plain enough that he took 'em all in, by the approprit pieces he spoke arter each lesson. I wish I could rec'lect 'em all; they was wonderful. I know one time we had free-will, an' 'twas the most excitin' occasion. I got so worked up over it, showin' how 'twas consistent with election an' foreord'nation, an' argifyin' that we was jest as free to pick an' choose as—as—anybody. An' next time he up an' speaks, "Hard, hard indeed was the contest for freedom an' the struggle for independence."

Oh, 'twas good as a sermon! An' agin, arter a course o' lessons on the power o' the devil an' how to resist him, he spoke that powerful piece, "They tell us, sir, that we are weak, unable to scope with so form'dable a adversary; but when shall we be stronger?" An' how he did go on about "Shall we 'quire the means o' effectooal resistance by lyin' s'pinely on our backs an' huggin' the d'lusive phantom o' hope?" an' all that. One day I

talked very strong about the Cath'lics, warned him ag'inst the Pope o' Rome, an' forbid him ever to go near popish folks. Next time he come he up an' spoke a piece about

"Banished from Rome? What's banished but set free
From daily contracts?"

That showed his views about the Pope plain enough, I think.

Oh, I never see a boy—let alone a ghost—take in truths like him. An' it done me good too. I'd got a little rusty on them doctrinal b'liefs myself, an' it rubbed up my knowledge wonderful. I studied up days, an' could hardly wait for class-time to come; an' jest 's soon 's I had the fust sniff o' pepp'mint arternoons, I'd be ready to start off. But I'd allers give him his chance fust, an' I growed to love that one thing he said every time, the only thing I ever heerd him reely say, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?" It seemed to mean more an' more each day, an' bimeby was 'most like a whole conversation. Jest from that one remark I begun to know all about his past life an' doin's, his folks, his

home, an' all. A poor, empty, neglected, lonesome life 'twas, an' my heart ached over it as it come out day by day in our talks. To think o' his never havin' had what my boys had so much on, all their days: meetin's, Sabbath-schools, cat'chisms, preparat'ry lectur's, monthly concerts, prayer-meetin's; he never'd had one o' them blessed priv'leges in his hull narrer little life. Well, as I said, I enjoyed the doctrinal teachin', the Old Test'ment an' all; but I was awful glad when with a clear conscience I could turn over the leaf an' show him t'other side. He'd been gettin' rather low in his mind lately, an' no wonder. For I hadn't felt to tell him anything yet but about our dreffle state o' sin, the punishment we deserved, an' the justice o' Him who could give it to us. To be sure, I got him to the p'int where he knowed 'twould be all perfectly right, consid'rin' the circumstances, if he should be sent right down to the place, as the hymn says,

"Where crooked ways o' sinners lead."

He was resigned to it, but he wa'n't exackly glad, an' he looked rather solemn. So I was

pleased enough when I begun to let in a mite o' sunshinin' an' told him the gospel story. An' I declare it never'd meant so much to me myself, church member as I'd been for more'n a dozen years, as when I begun to tell it to that poor little ghost. I begun way at the very beginnin', an' it was quite a spell afore he see what was comin'. He thought I was jest givin' an account of a common, ord'nary boy. I see that was the way to int'rest him, so I told about Him as a little feller, with his mother, an' in the carpenter's shop, an' round the water an' the shore with the fishermen an' sailors. I was thinkin' o' my own boys on the salt-water at Portsmouth an' Kitt'ry when I dwelt so on that part. But pretty soon I rec'-lected how Norvle was fetched up on risin' ground, so I told about His bein' so fond o' the hills, goin' up "into a mountin apart," as the Bible says, to pray an' to preach, or to set there alone. An' how Norvle's face did light up then, an' his whity-blue eyes shine! I don't doubt he was thinkin' o' the New Hampshire hills. For crampin' 's they be, folks that lives among 'em do learn to love 'em lots.

So it went on, till it come nigh the last part o' the narr'tive. No need for me to remind you o' that. I'd knowed it allers, learnt it to my Sabbath-school scholars, heerd it talked an' preached an' sung all my born days, but 'twas like a bran'-new thing 's I told it to Norvle, an' the tears jest ran down my face like rain. He didn't cry. I guess ghosts never does. But oh, how mournful an' sorry he looked, with his eyes opened wide an' lookin' straight into my face, an' his lips kind o' tremblin'! For quite a spell now he'd been speakin' diff'ent sort o' pieces — hymns an' sech. An' now he begun to say sech beautiful ones, hymns an' psalms I hadn't even thought on for years. Some o' 'em I learnt afore I could read, from hearin' mother say 'em over 'n' over to me as I set on the little cricket at her feet. How I felt as he'd say, soft an' gentle like, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?" an' then foller it right up with one o' them sweet old hymns I always rec'lected in mother's voice! Oh, I loved him harder 'n' harder every day! He was jest's homely's ever, jest's freckled, his hair jest 's reddish-yeller an' mus-

sy, but he looked diff'ent, somehow. There was a kind o' rested, quiet, satisfied look come on his face by spells that made him prettier to look at. An' bimeby that look come to stay. I couldn't make you understand 'f I tried—an' I ain't goin' to try—how I see what was happenin' in that soul. But I did see. I knowed the very hour — the minute 'most — when he see the hull truth an' give up to it. There didn't seem to be any powerful conviction o' sin. Mebbe ghosts don't need to go through that. P'r'aps it's their bodies that makes that work so strong in folks, an' ghosts 'ain't got any bodies. So 'twas a easy, smooth specie o' conversion, an' Norvle hisself didn't seem to know when it happened. He kep' comin' jest the same, allers askin' his little question, an' speakin' his piece. An' allers there come with him that pepp'minty scent. To this day that common, ev'ry-day, physicky smell brings more things back to me than even cinnamon-roses or day-lilies like them in the old garden on the Odiorne's P'int road. I went on all the time with my teachin'. I knowed Norvle was all right now, an' safe

for ever 'n' ever. But there's plenty o' things even perfessors need to know, an' I did so like to learn him.

'Twas gettin' past the middle o' December now. One day I walked a little ways down street for exercise an' fresh air, an' all to once there come over me sech a strong rec'lection o' Portsmouth woods. I didn't know why 'twas for a minute, but then I begun to smell a piny, woodsy smell, an' I see right on the side-walk a lot o' evergreens—pine an' hemlock an' spruce. Then I remembered that Christmas was comin'. You see, pa an' ma had allers made a good deal o' Christmas. Congregationals in old times never done so. I know pa said that one time old Parson Pickerin', o' Greenland, sent back a turkey that gran'f'ther Jenness give him Christmas, sayin' he'd ruther have it some other time than on a popish hollerday. But we was fetched up to keep the day. Why, up to the very last Christmas o' their lives my three boys hung their blue yarn stockin's up by the fireplace, though Amos was past nineteen then, an' Ezry goin' on seventeen. So 'twas a time full

o' rec'lectin' for me. The year afore I'd jest put it all out o' my head an' tried to forget what day 'twas. But I couldn't forget it here. 'Twas in the air; 'twas ev'rywhere you went. The stores was full o' playthings, folks was traipsin' through the streets with their hands an' arms full o' bundles, ev'rybody that passed you was talkin' about it, an' 'twas no use tryin' to git red on it. It made me choky an' wat'ry-eyed all the time, an' I couldn't see nothin' ary blessed minute but the old wood fire at home, with the big yarn stockin's hangin' there. But one day arter Norvle had left, an' the pepp'mint scent hadn't quite gone out o' the room, I begun to think why I couldn't make a Christmas for him. Now don't laugh at me. I wa'n't a fool. I knowed 's well 's you do that ghosts don't want presents or keep days. But I was so lonesome, an' jest hungry for a stockin' to fill—a boy's stockin'. "So why," I says to myself, "shouldn't I make bleeve—'play' 's the children says—that Norvle wants a real old-fashioned Christmas, an' I can give him one?" The next time he come I led up to the subject an' found out, 's I sus-

picioned, that he'd never heerd o' Christmas or Santy Claus in all his born days. So I told him all about it, an' he was so int'rested.

Fust I told him whose birthday 'twas, o' course, an' why folks kep' it. Then I told him all about fam'lies all gettin' together at that time, an' comin' home from everywheres, to be with their own folks. An' I went on about hangin' up stockin's an' fillin' 'em with presents. "An' now, Norvle," I says, "I'm goin' to make a real old-fashioned Christmas for you this year, sech as we used to have in the old house; sech as we made for Amos an' Ezry an' Peleg. For," I says, "you've been a real good boy this winter, an' I set as much by you 'most—p'r'aps jest as much—as I done by my own boys." He looked dreffle tickled, an' so 'twas settled. How I did enjoy gettin' ready! 'Twa'n't so easy as it seems. For I'd set my heart on havin' the same kind o' presents as we used to give the boys, an' they wa'n't plenty in New York city. The stockin' was easy enough, for I had one o' Peleg's. You see, I kind o' liked to have some o' the boys' things about, an' I had some o' the old

blue feetin' layin' on my stockin' basket 's if they was waitin' to be darned. They looked nat'ral an' good, you see. Peleg was nigh about Norvle's size. Then I wanted a partikler specie o' apple, big an' red an' shiny; we called 'em the Boardman reds. I found some to the market at last. They didn't exackly look like the old kind; but the man said they was, he'd jest fetched 'em from Portsmouth hisself. The hick'ry-nuts I got easy enough, an' the maple-sugar. I was goin' to get some pepp'mint lozengers, for my boys all thought so much o' them, but it seemed too pers'nal, an' I give 'em up. I got a big stick o' ball lick'rish, though — boys allers like that — an' some B'gundy pitch to chew. Then o' course there must be a jack-knife. I found jest the right kind, big, with a black horn handle an' two blades. I set up late nights an' riz early to knit a pair o' red yarn mittens, like Peleg's; they're so good for snowballin', you know. An' I wound a yarn ball, an' covered it with leather. I had a diff'cult time findin' the fish-hooks an' sinkers, for I hadn't been round no great in New York, an' there ain't no general

store there. But I found 'em at last. Right on top I was goin' to put Pely's little chunky, leather cover Bible. Mother give it to him the day he jined the Church, an' writ his name in her straight up an' down, prim handwritin'. I knowed she an' him both would be willin' it should go to this poor little soul the Scripters meant so much to, an' had done so much for.

The New York greens didn't satisfy me. There was some stuff with sicky green leaves an' white, tallery-lookin' berries, an' some all shinin' an' pricky, with red fruit. But they didn't look nat'ral. Bimeby I come acrost some ground-pine, sech as growed all through the wood lot behind the old house, spranglin' over the ground, an' some juniper, like what spread amongst the rocks there, with its little black berries an' sharp, scratchy needles. I couldn't get any black alder nor bittersweet berries, an' had to do without 'em. Oh, you don't know what it was to me, an' my poor empty heart that had ached till 'twas 'most numb, to get that stockin' ready. Ev'ry day I talked Christmas to Norvle, never lettin' him know, o' course, what I was goin' to give

him, but tellin' all about diff'ent Christmases I'd knowed. I went on about how the fam'ly was allers together, an' father wore his best clothes an' set to the head o' the table, an' mother t'other end, an' me an' the boys all there. 'Twas nat'ral I s'pose, consid'rin', that I dwelt on that part of it, folks all bein' together that day, lovin' an' doin' for their very own. Then I told him how Christmas Eve we all used to stand together, the boys an' me, an' sing pa's favrit piece, "Home, sweet Home." I carried the toon, Peleg sung a real sweet second, Ezry had the high part, an' Amos the low. How it fetched it all back to tell it over to him!

The last night but one come—the twenty-third 'twas. Norvle had looked real mournful-like lately. Ev'ry time I spoke o' father's house, or fam'lies gettin' together or goin' home for Christmas, I see he looked kind o' sorry an' 's if he wanted somethin'. But I wouldn't see what it meant. That arternoon, though, when he'd ast, in a shaky, still voice, "Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?" he follered it up with the dear old

hymn mother whispered part of, the very last day of her life—

> "Airth has engrossed my love too long,
> 'Tis time to lift my eyes."

He went on with all the verses, an' when he come to

> "O let me mount to join their song,"

he said it 's if he was prayin' to me, an' sech a longin' sound come into his voice, an' sech a longin' look into his eyes, that I was all goose-flesh, an' so choky. When he'd finished, I turned away to get my handk'chief, an' when I looked back agin he was gone.

Well, I s'pose you see now what I'd got to do, an' what my plain duty was. I really had knowed it all along, but I'd shet my eyes to it a purpose till now; but I couldn't no longer. That poor soul o' Norvle's was regen'rated, saved cert'in sure, an' what business had I to keep it down here any longer? You see it plain enough, but no one but me — an' One other — knows how much it meant to me that night. "Couldn't I," says I to myself— "couldn't I keep him only one day longer,

jest over that seas'n o' Christmas, so hard, so ter'ble hard to bear without him? Anyway, couldn't I have him till mornin', an' let him have his stockin'? When he was goin' to have sech a long, long time up there, would jest one day more down here make any great diff'rence?" The answer come quick enough. Yes, 'twould! He b'longed somewher's else, an' I must send him there, an' right straight off, too, even if it broke my heart all to pieces doin' it.

All the next day I went about my work very softly. It seemed like the day o' the boys' fun'ral. I'd filled the stockin' two days afore—I couldn't wait—an' there it laid in my room, never, never to be hung up, all bulgy an' onreg'lar an' knobby. I knowed what ary bulge meant. That one by the ankle was the jack-knife, an' that queer place nigh the knee was where the stick o' lick'rish had got crosswise an' poked 'way out each side. There was one Boardman red apple roundin' out the toe like a darnin' ball, an' right in the top was Pely's chunky little Bible jest showin' above the ribbed part. I didn't empty it. Folks

will keep sech things, you know, an' it's up in my bedroom somewher's now, I bleeve.

Well, Christmas-eve come, an' come quick —too quick for me that time. I'd made up my mind 'twouldn't never do to let Norvle see how I felt. I had a good deal o' Jenness grit, an' I called it all up now. So, when he come in, I was jest as usual, an' smiled at him real pleasant; but I felt 'twouldn't do to wait a single minute, for fear I'd break down, so afore he could make his one little remark, for the fust time sence I knowed him, I begun fust, an' he stood still an' listened.

"Norvle," I says, speakin' 's I used to to the boys' playfellers that used to come an' see 'em an' want to stay on an' on—"Norvle, I've had a real nice visit with you. I've enjoyed your comp'ny lots, an' I wish I could ask you to stay longer. But it's Christmas-eve, you know, an', 's I've often told you, people 'd oughter be with their own folks to-night. You know now where your folks is, leastways your Father an' your Elder Brother. So, I'm dreffle sorry to seem imperlite an' send you off, but—why, this bein' Christmas Eve,

's I said afore, I really think—the best thing for you to do—is—to go—Home!" I got it out somehow; I don't see how I done it.

Norvle looked right at me, kind o' mournful. He stood stock-still, an' I thought he was goin' to make his one little remark, but he didn't. Jest 's true 's I live, that boy opened his mouth an' begun to sing. An' oh! what do you suppose he sung? "Home, sweet Home!" He'd never sung afore; I didn't know 's he could; but his voice was like a wood-robin now. An' in a minute, though there wa'n't anybody but him an' me in the room, seemed 's if I heerd some other voices. Norvle carried the toon, but I heerd a real sweet second, an' then a high part an' a low. 'Twas jest like four boys singin' together. An' while I looked at him the music sounded further 'n' further off, till when he got to the last "sweet—sweet—home," I had to lean 'way forward to ketch a sound. An' when it stopped—why, he stopped. He didn't go; he jest wasn't there.

Well, I've got along somehow. You do get along through most things, hard 's they

be. It's more'n forty year now sence my ghost story happened, an' I'm an old woman. I'm failin' lately pretty fast, an' it makes me think a good deal about goin' home myself to jine pa 'n' ma 'n' the boys. I might 's well tell you that when I say the boys, I mean *four* on 'em. For, b'sides my three, I'm cert'in there's goin' to be another one, a little chap with rough, reddish-yeller hair, an' lots o' freckles. Course I know it's all diff'ent up there, an' things ain't a speck like what they be here; but somehow it won't seem exackly nat'ral if that little feller don't somewher's in the course o' conv'sation bring in that favrit remark o' his'n,

"Don't you want to hear me speak my piece?"

THE END.

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